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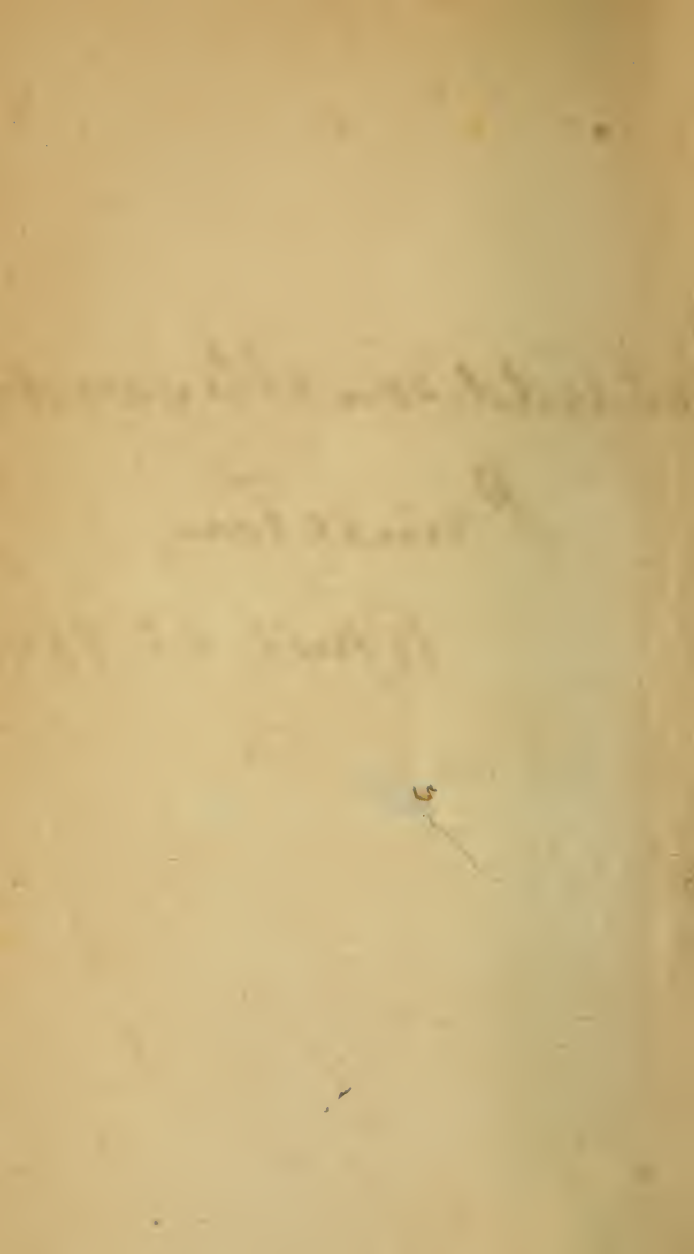
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THE
APOCALYPSE INTERPRETED

IN THE LIGHT OF

“THE DAY OF THE LORD.”

BY THE

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PREFACE.



HAVING accomplished, so far, his undertaking of an Interpretation of the Apocalypse in the light of "THE DAY OF THE LORD"—the period to which, he believes, the prophecies of this book relate, the Author feels he has much reason, notwithstanding the inadequacy of his poor labours—of which he is conscious, "to thank God, and to take courage." Many refreshing tokens of prayerful hearts being interested in the prosecution of his work, have reached him from time to time. He only laments, in answer to the impulses they would give him towards an accelerated progress of publication, that, with the pressure upon him of other occupations, he cannot yield to them as he would wish. However, he still contemplates proceeding, if the Lord will, with the monthly numbers, and invites the helpful

communications of his readers on any passage before him, whereon they may feel God has given them discernment.

He is bound to say, that, having carefully reviewed what he has written, and weighed the animadversions of opposing brethren on the *principle* of interpretation employed by him, the result is, a confirmed conviction that in this important point he is right; and that in the future—he would say, now *imminent*, dealings of God with the Jew and Gentile—nationally, and in these alone, lies the thread of the fulfilment of the Apocalyptic visions from beginning to end; the Church of God under this dispensation being heréunto previously organized into her place in the heavens with Jesus her Lord. 1 Thes. iv. 17.

Upon the import assigned to the term ἡ Κυριακή ἡμέρα, “*the Lord’s day*,”* the Author relies with especial confidence. Between this and the almost identical expression found in the Old Testament Scriptures and the Epistles, ἡ ἡμέρα Κυρίου, “*the day of the Lord*,” he cannot perceive any such difference as that while the latter is admitted to

* Rev. i. 10; see page 31.

refer to the great crisis of the world yet future, the former merely denotes the weekly recurring season for Christian worship. Indeed, the only variation between the two forms of expression is, simply, that in the one case (*ἡ Κυριακή ἡμέρα*) the possessive *adjective* occurs, in the other (*ἡ ἡμέρα Κυρίου*) the *substantive*. And, since in the Gospel by St. Luke,* the similar variation between the phraseology—"the days of the Son of Man," and "His day," where the pronoun is used instead of the noun, is not suffered to affect the one substantial meaning, why should it be suffered to do so here?

As to the argument derived from long established usage, it is true that by some of the early Fathers, and from their time onwards, the term, "*Lord's day*," has been used to designate the Christian Sabbath, the first day of the week. But, besides, as has been already observed,† that declension from the plain literal interpretation of Scripture, especially the prophetic portion of it, was very rapid after the decease of the Apostles; the misnomer may, possibly, be further accounted for

* Luke xvii. 22, 24.

† See page 33.

by the fact, that amongst the Heathens, the first day of the week, which they dedicated to the Sun, was commonly entitled *the day of the Sun*—*DOMINUS SOL*. It is even stated in a modern Almanac,* that in this signification, prior to the

* “Wherever we look into the customs of ancient nations regarding the origin of the names given to the days of the week, we discover a unity of purpose. Every thing shews a common source, a similar intention or meaning, in devoting the seven days of the week each to one of the seven planets. Thus we find, that not only did the English names derive their origin from the Saxon names for the same days, which were the names of the Slavonian gods—the planets, but the French, Spanish, and Italian nations, have taken exactly the same names as the ancient Romans had for the seven days. These were derived by that people from the oriental names long after the original cause of those names had been forgotten. The first day they called *Dies Dominicus*, or *Dominica*, the “Lord’s” Day, meaning the “Lord” Sun; for the Sun was always called *Dominus Sol*, the “Lord Sun.” Thus, the Persians called their God *Mithra* (the Sun), “the Lord Mithra;” and the Syrians gave their epithet of *Adonis*, which equally means Lord, to the Sun. This word is derived from the Hebrew [אֲדֹנָי], *ADONAI*, the name of God; the root of the word being [אָדָן], *DAN*, a ruler or judge. And no doubt the term was often applied among the Hebrews to the great light of heaven, the Sun; it signified, as Baal or Molech did also, the Lord, or Prince of the planets. Porphyry, in a prayer to the Sun, calls him *Dominus Sol*; and, in short, all the oriental nations gave the Sun the title of Lord, or Master. Though the Romans called the FIRST day of the week the day of the Lord Sun, or briefly *Dies Dominica*, “the Lord’s day,” they merely called the others by the simple names of the planets to which they were dedicated. Thus, they named the

1st day, <i>Dies Dominica</i> , the day of the Lord Sun	☉
2nd day, <i>Dies Lunæ</i> , the day of the Moon	☾
3rd day, <i>Dies Martis</i> , the day of Mars	♂
4th day, <i>Dies Mercurii</i> , the day of Mercury	☿
5th day, <i>Dies Jovis</i> , the day of Jupiter	♃
6th day, <i>Dies Veneris</i> , the day of Venus	♀
7th day, <i>Dies Saturnii</i> , the day of Saturn	♄.”

Zadkiel's Almanac for 1849.

Christian era, the heathens employed the now Ecclesiastical term, "*dies Dominica*," (the exact equivalent in Latin to *ἡμέρα Κυριακή*). Not to urge this however, which the Author leaves to be tested by his more learned readers; the circumstance of the first day of the week having been denominated in Pagan nomenclature *the day of Dominus Sol*, (and of this there is no doubt), would naturally combine with oversight of the true import of Scripture, to lead the early Christians to identify it with *ἡμέρα κυριακή*, only elevating its application to the day on which *their* Lord rose from the dead. And, doubtless, for this ennobling of the common term, they considered that provision had been made by God himself, in the setting forth of Christ as "the Sun of righteousness,"* the anti-type of the great luminary in the heavens.† Thus, *Justin Martyr*, writing his apology to the heathen says, "We all meet together on *Sunday* (*diem Solis*), on which God having changed Darkness and Matter, created the world; and on this day Jesus Christ our Saviour arose from the dead."‡

May we not suppose, also, that it was this apparent symbolizing with the Heathen concerning

* Malachi iv.

+ Psalm xix.

‡ Justin, Apol. ii. p. 99.

the title of the first day of the week, which occasioned the allegation against the early Christians, that they were worshippers of the Sun.*

That there *was* a tendency in the ancient Church thus to supplant Heathenism by accommodating its festival days to the commemoration of the glorious facts of Christianity, may be collected from Ecclesiastical history. Of this, the appointment of the twenty-fifth of December for the anniversary of the Nativity of our Lord, is a striking illustration. For whereas, amidst the conflicting traditions of the Fathers, there is insuperable difficulty in proving such to have been really the day of this great event; it is affirmed by mythologists, that on that very day the birth of the God SOL was universally celebrated by the Heathen, when, after the supposed winter solstice, he began to increase and gradually to ascend. Moreover, what renders this coincidence still more significant, is the following remarkable statement in Bingham's Antiquities:—"Some also think the very design of appointing the feast of Christ's nativity, and at this season of the year, was chiefly *to oppose the*

* See Bingham's Antiquities. Book xx. chap. ii.

*vanities and excesses which the Heathens indulged themselves in upon their SATURNALIA and KALENDS OF JANUARY at this very time of the year.**

These considerations certainly make out a case of probability, as to Heathen usage having contributed some influence towards the popular designation of the first day of the week as "*the Lord's day.*"

But now, further, looking at this term in its right acceptation, as "THE DAY OF THE LORD," let us see if there be any thing unintelligible, as has been alleged, in John's being *in spirit, in that future period*, when he was in the Isle of Patmos.

And first: the inscription prefixed to Isaiah's prophecy, runs thus: "The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah;" that is, the Prophet saw the visions which he records, in the days of these several kings. But to what period did these visions relate, but to the *future* with which he was conversant *in spirit*, the Holy Ghost working in him to this effect? Or, to show

* Bingham's Antiquities. Book xx. Sect. v.

this more precisely. In the second chapter of his prophecy, we read: "The word that Isaiah the Prophet saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem;" and when we examine that word, we find that it emphatically belongs to "*the last days,*" when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it;" that is, the Prophet, upwards of two thousand years ago, saw a vision of the happy consummation yet to be realized in the restoration of the Jews, and the consequences of this event to the world at large. And how did he behold this, but *in spirit*, and *by the Spirit*? the very thing which John predicates, and implies of himself—"I was in spirit, in the Lord's day."

Let us observe, also, how the Apostle Paul speaks of himself, in his epistle to the Corinthians. One of the members of that Church had fallen into grievous sin; and the Apostle, in giving his decision, as to how he was to be treated, thus introduces it: "For I verily, as *absent in body* but *present in spirit*, have judged already." Thus he was not in Corinth *bodily*, on the occasion in question, but he was there *in spirit*. And, to the

same effect, he writes to the Colossians: "*Though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.*" Col. ii. 5.

Once more, to take another familiar case, "Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and was glad." And how did he see it but *in spirit*?

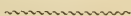
But to conclude: this important principle of interpretation has now been carried out to the end of the seventh chapter, comprising one great division of the book, and its value can be experimentally determined. To this issue, then, the Author consigns it; hopeful, under God, of the result, wherever prejudice intervenes not in the mind of the reader.

He is sensible, that to those Christians who may be denominated *Theologians*, rather than Scripture students, this volume will present little attraction; for such parties are generally so attached to their arranged systems of truth, that research into its details, with the modifying influence *on systems*, which it necessarily exerts, proves irksome to them. And, yet this ought not to be. Theology, *legitimately*, should be to the

exploration of Scripture, what the known principles of any science are to its further elucidation, not inimical, but ancillary. As Lord Bacon says of the progress of natural philosophy, we may say of theology—"it should be *ascendant and descendant, from experiments to axioms, and from axioms to new discoveries.*" So that where this is not the case, but there prevails a shrinking from the continuous investigation of revealed truth, it is a sign that the theology in question partakes rather of human theories than of Divine verities.

To Theology, of the right school, then, the Author consoles himself with the reflection, that his efforts will not be unwelcome; but that like the fresh soundings of the ocean to the hydrographer, they will be hailed with all their deficiencies as contributing to a further digest of God's mind and ways. And, even when the continuous strain of interpretation does not commend itself, the Author trusts that as fragmentary elucidations of Scripture in general, his work will not be found altogether unprofitable. To this end, may God give his blessing, for his dear Son's sake!

INTRODUCTION.



MANY have come to the study of the book of “the Revelation” with their own preconceived thoughts as to its contents, and pursuing these, they have not unnaturally missed the apprehension of the truth, even *God’s thoughts*. Hence this portion of Scripture is so little understood. And in regard to its numerous popular Commentators, we may say with an old Latin writer,* that it is like the poor woman in the Gospel, who, with her many physicians, fared nothing the better, but “rather grew worse.” The fact is, as in the case of the patient, medical skill often fails because of its not confining itself to *assisting nature*; so has the Apocalypse bid defiance to the elaborate performances of our most learned writers, simply because they have

* Pareus.

begun with their own ingenious theories, instead of being content to follow the inspired hints scattered throughout the Sacred Text itself. God grant that the Author who has now come into the field, may be graciously preserved from thus adding another *Apocrypha*, or concealment of the *Apocalypse*, to the many already published.

Indeed, he has a strong conviction, that through God's blessing, pursuing the principle* already gathered from the book itself, if he and his Christian readers will but sit loose to the "traditions of men," defer only to the authority of the word, and depend upon the teaching of the Holy Ghost, they shall not fail to rejoice in these testimonies of God, "as one that findeth great spoil,"—even sacred spoil recovered from the hands of mere embellishers of profane history.

* See "Apocalyptic Interpretation."—Nisbet & Co.

THE APOCALYPSE INTERPRETED.

CHAPTER I.

SECTION FIRST.

Verses 1—3.

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John :

2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein : for the time is at hand.

Ver. 1. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ.*] Such is the title of this book, that is, the *unveiling* of this glorious one ; his coming forth with his mighty acts, to assume the dominion of the world. It is not to be regarded as a mere recital of events *by* him, but as a Revelation *of* him. See 1 Pet. i. 13. The word “ *Revelation* ” when predicated of a Person, is invariably used to signify the *appearance* of that person. It is translated “ appearing,” 1 Pet. i. 7 ; and “ manifestation,” Rom. viii. 19. A verbal form is given to it by our translators, in

2 Thess. i. 7 ; but it is the same word that is used. Perhaps, with this position, one passage may seem to clash—Eph. iii. 3. But all doubt is removed by a reference to Gal. i. 11, 12, which clearly shows, that the word in the former passage, as in other places, refers to the *personal* appearing “of Jesus Christ.” See on ver. 9.

Which God gave unto him.] That is, as in the days of his flesh, he gave him the rehearsal scene of the transfiguration. Our Lord’s capability of accessive knowledge (Luke ii. 52. Mark xiii. 32.) was an attribute of his human nature, to which he submitted as *the Christ* ; just as he did, to the capability of suffering hunger, thirst, weariness, and death. Heb. ii. 17.

To show unto his servants.] In the Epistles, which manifestly relate to this dispensation, we do not find that any of the Churches are addressed under this denomination, “servants.” Saints, and faithful brethren in Christ, are the prevailing appellations. Also, in John xv., our Lord assigns to the Apostles, who, it would appear in this Gospel, represent the Church, the rank of “*Friends*,” in emphatic contrast with that of “servants.” Perhaps, the latter title, here used, should suggest to us, that the strict interpretation of this book, concerns Jewish disciples, not belonging to the mystery of this dispensation, whose standing, when the time arrives, will have a corresponding aspect.

Things which must shortly come to pass.] Such are the contents of this book. It is not to be studied as history simply, to improve the past; but as prophecy, to make known the future. In this point of view, Noah is an example of the use of prophecy. See Gen. vi. 13—22. Heb. xi. 7. The Antediluvians serve as an awful beacon against the neglect of it.

Shortly.] It has been hence argued, that the prophecies of this book, must at least have *commenced* their course of fulfilment soon after John's days; for that otherwise the word "*shortly*" would be without meaning. But it is to be remembered, that the whole interval between the first and second advents of Christ, is called by the Holy Ghost, "*a little while.*" John xvi. 16. Heb. x. 37. And we meet with the very same word, "*shortly,*" in Rom. xvi. 20, where it is said, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet *shortly*;" although it is clear that such event has not yet taken place, nor shall be, till Christ comes again. See Rev. xii. 10. So far, accordingly, as this clause is concerned, there is nothing to forbid the view of this book being even yet, *wholly unfulfilled.*

And he sent and signified it by his angel.] Elsewhere, in the communications of the Lord Jesus to his Church of this dispensation, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is the *direct* inspirer of the chosen instrument employed on the occasion.

Here we have the intervention of an “*angel;*” in keeping, perhaps, with the title just used, “*servants,*” i. e.—as already hinted on a former clause, betokening Jewish witnesses to Christ, who shall yet be raised up. And thus an analogy is presented at the outset, between this book and that of the prophet Daniel, who was also communicated with, through an angel.

Unto his servant John.] This title is frequently assumed by Paul in the inscription of his Epistles, and so there may be nothing peculiar in the appropriation of it by John. But still, it *may* be designed to comport with the other minute points already remarked on, touching the probably Jewish character of those disciples, to whom the book more immediately belongs. According to the mind of God, John may here be assuming their place, in receiving this Revelation.

Ver. 2. *Who bare record of the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*] Literally, “*who ~~both~~ testified the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ.*”

This is just a periphrasis for the contents of this book, as summarily described in the next clause, “*all things which he saw.*” For it is observable, the copulative “*and*” is not in the original; so that it is not an additional proposition which meets us, but a concise explanation of the one foregoing. The insertion of the word—*even*, putting the two

propositions in *apposition* with each other, would be more consistent with the structure of the original. The expression, “*testimony of Jesus Christ,*” occurs further on, in chap. xii. 17, with obvious reference to a remnant of believing Jews in the latter day, who shall possess this book. And in chap. xix. 10, it seems generally defined to be “*the Spirit of Prophecy.*”

The ninth verse explains where John was, when he received this testimony, even in the Isle of Patmos. There is no authority in Scripture, for the belief that he was *banished* to Patmos. Tradition alone, and not a very satisfactory one, supports this view. The truth seems to be, that he went to Patmos, to receive this series of visions, as Paul went to Arabia, for a similar purpose.*

Ver. 3. *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy.*] Such is the commendation of the study of this book. It aptly applies to the exercise of the Minister, and his congregation, now, when they meet together, the one to read and expound, the other to hear these words of God; but, perhaps it is framed thus, with a special reference to the order of the synagogue, after which Jewish platform, the seven Churches, to whom this book is primarily addressed, would seem to be constructed. We shall see this as we proceed.

* See Apocalyptic Interpretation, page 58.

And keep those things which are written therein.]

Mary “kept in her heart,” we read Luke ii. 51, all the sayings of the youthful Jesus; and thus, no doubt, as the period for his manifestation drew on, their deep significancy was more and more appreciated by her. So should it be with the student of prophecy. As the utterance of the Spirit of Christ, however obscure the meaning now, it should be devoutly laid up in his memory, to give and receive elucidation as time rolls on. Herein, also, is the antidote against that “failing of the heart for fear,” which will characterize the world in the coming day of trial. See Luke xxi. 26.

It is to be observed, that no such marked commendation as the foregoing, is bestowed on the reading of any other portion of Scripture, as though God foresaw the disparagement which would be cast on this book. The *blessedness* pronounced on the reading of it, may be said to consist—1st. In its promoting fellowship with God, through the knowledge of his future dealings with his creatures. 2ndly. In the light which it thus sheds, for the practical guidance of the Saint, on his present walk. For it exposes and lays bare the final plot of the great adversary—Satan, with which, being conversant, we can see through and detect his present wiles. 3rdly. In its awakening due interest in behalf of the Jewish people. The Christian Church has, alas! forgotten and despised

them ; but by the study of this book, the *Jew* is forced upon our attention ; just as Ahasuerus was providentially reminded by the perusal of the Chronicles of his Empire, of the overlooked Mordecai, to whom he was such a debtor. Esther vi. And this is to our great advantage, for Jews have ever been the means of blessing to others. “Salvation is,” and will be, of the Jews, John iv. 22. The Lord Jesus was a Jew ; the Apostles and first Disciples were Jews ; and acquaintance with the prophetic word, hinges upon—the Jews. 4thly. And this is the great reason assigned by the Holy Ghost, “Blessed is he who readeth, and they who hear the words of this prophecy,” for “*the time is at hand*,” i. e. it is incompatible with a *postponed* attention, in the midst of which may burst forth the events here rehearsed. In fact, this announcement of the proximity of the great crisis, is used as a motive to diligence in the study of this book, just as it is used elsewhere, to enforce the cultivation of weanedness of spirit from the world. See 1 Cor. vii. 29.

Nor is this circumstance to be overlooked, in connection with the injunction laid upon Daniel, respecting his prophecy, Dan. xii. 4 ; especially when we take into consideration what we shall presently see abundant reason for believing, that Daniel’s prophecy relates to the same crisis with “the Revelation.” It is as if God here said,

Seal not the vision now, but read, read, and a blessing upon him who does so, for at length impends “the time of the end,” or “the time is at hand.” Ought not this to suggest to us the expediency of examining one prophecy with the cross light of the other.

CHAPTER I.

SECTION SECOND.

Verses 4--8.

4 JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia : Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come ; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne ;

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

THE preceding exposition of the expressions “the Revelation of Jesus Christ,” and, “things which must shortly come to pass,” at once subverts the

notion, that what follows, must, necessarily, be a prediction of God's dealings with the Church and the world, during the present dispensation; and that, therefore, the greater part of this book must now be regarded as a symbolic history of the events of the past 1800 years of the Christian era. We now come to the inscription of the book.

Ver. 4. *John to the seven churches which are in Asia.*] John had received this Revelation from Jesus, in order to communicate it to these Churches, and here he begins to execute his commission. The Churches addressed, are named from seven cities in Asia-minor. In *all* these cities, there may have existed in the Apostle's days, Christian Churches; in *some*, we know there did. But it is interesting to observe, that the phraseology used in this inscription, is of such latitude, as to admit of the interpretation being referred to *future* Churches in those cities, if, as we proceed, we find the meaning of "the Lord's day," in which John saw the vision of these Churches, requires such interpretation. Moreover, compared with the inscriptions to the ordinary Epistles, the latitude of phraseology here, is the more remarkable; for the verb substantive is not in the original.*

And should we have to regard the word of God in the following epistles, as merely lighting

* See "Apocalyptic Interpretation," page 75.

upon the past, but principally pointing to the future, we ought to feel no difficulty. For the Lord's prophecy on the Mount of Olives, was addressed to the disciples, not simply, personally, but as the representatives of a Jewish remnant in the latter days; and it is only as we interpret it of that remnant, who will occupy a position at his second coming, analagous to that which his early disciples did at his first, that we shall find it intelligible and consistent.*

It is, doubtless, not without some pregnant reason, that these Churches in Asia are addressed as numerically "seven," instead of *one* in the aggregate. And perhaps it is because the term *seven* has the power of denoting a complex unity, according to that use of it, (to go no further into the laws of this *perfect* number, as it has been called,) which obtained in God's creating of the heaven and the earth, wherein there were seven acts, constituting the one great work. And therefore, all believers in every age, who constitute the "one body of Christ,"—that most comprehensive organization of unity, may be said to be here represented, as it is plain they are admonished in those oracular words, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

Grace be unto you and peace.] The substantial

* See "Apocalyptic Interpretation," page 67.

meaning of this salutation, the usual one throughout the Epistles, resolves itself into this:—‘ May the true God be known by you ;’ for he is “ the God of all *grace* ;” and the simple knowledge of him, as such, gives *peace* to the soul. Indeed, if we have not peace, it is simply because we know not God.

Oh! then, acquaint thyself, reader, with your God. And if you enquire how you can compass this, remember, it can only be by the Holy Ghost opening your eyes to see him as revealed in Christ. And be further assured, it is necessary to know God, and thus have peace with him, in order to relish this precious book. They who are not at peace with God, as pardoned sinners, will naturally disparage it, for they are taken up with themselves, and care not for his glorious purposes, of which, this book is full.

Which is, and which was, and which is to come.] Or, more literally, ‘ *the Is, the Was, and the coming One.*’ Here is the title of absolute incomprehensible Godhead, as it stands in the person of the Father, who is made known to us, however, in the process of redemption.

And were not God the *triune* Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we cannot conceive how there could have been redemption ; yea, and it will bear reflection ;—even *creation*, to any abiding purpose.

In Christ—also, by the Holy Ghost, the Reve-

lation of God will ever be going on, without being exhausted. Thus, the Father will ever be “THE COMING ONE.” And hence, in his redeemed and glorified creatures, there will be scope, throughout eternity, for the exercise of faith and hope. There is nothing incompatible with this in 1 Cor. xiii. 13, where the Apostle affirms charity to be greater than faith and hope. It *is* truly greater. It is, and ever will be, the principal thing; as is the blossom of the flower. But the others equally abide; and so the Apostle states—“Now *abideth* these three, faith, hope, and charity, but the greatest of these is charity.” He had compared “charity,” or love, with *non-abiding* acquisitions. Now he compares it with the *abiding* graces of faith and hope, and still gives it the palm.

That there will be eternal scope, then, for the exercise of these graces, is here indicated, in that the style and description of the Father, is still ‘*the coming One* ;’ fresh knowledge of whom will ever be pouring forth to the creature, through the Revealer of God,—Jesus Christ.

And from the seven Spirits.] This title belongs to the Holy Ghost, evidently, in relation to the seven Churches just specified. But as *they* may be regarded as standing secondarily for the universal Church, as the one body of Christ; so, *the Holy Ghost*, as the seven Spirits of God, may be viewed as pervading that one body, being in

distributive unity, the vital, energizing Spirit in the whole Church.

Which are before the throne.] The prime ministers of Eastern princes took their places before the throne, as we see in the account of Solomon's court, 1 Kings x. 8; so the Holy Ghost is here set forth as the executive of the Father, and of the Son.

Ver. 5. And from Jesus Christ.] The usual order of the persons in the Trinity is here departed from, apparently, that John might, with the more appropriateness, dwell on, and enumerate the titles of Christ. And, being full of the description of his glorious Lord, as assumed by himself in vision, he now proceeds to pourtray him accordingly.

(1) *Who is the faithful witness.*] This style we find assumed by our Lord in the Epistle to the Church of the Laodiceans, chap. iii. 14. Implying, I should say, that Jesus Christ testifies to God, reveals him *truly* to his creatures. "The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John i. 18. As we contemplate Christ, we know God; Christ is "THE WORD." A word is the utterance of the inward idea; by it the otherwise hidden thought is made known. So Christ is the intelligent revealer of the otherwise invisible God. He is, in this grand sense, "THE FAITHFUL WITNESS."

He is such, also, as the true prophet and teacher of his Church. John v. 39; Luke xxiv. 27. And

lastly, this character belongs to him, as he is emphatically "*the Truth*;" everything opposed to him, yea, every thing out of him, being a lie.

(2) *And the first begotten of the dead.*] John took this title also, from what he had seen and heard; testifying to his Lord, in the same way in which he had testified of himself. See verses 17, 18; and ch. ii. 8. It seems especially to appertain to Christ in his relation to the Church. Colos. i. 18. Though, indeed, all his relationships involve resurrection. The promise to David, that the fruit of his body should sit upon his throne, implied resurrection. As also that to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; and so, Isaac, the proximate seed, as a type of Christ, was received by Abraham from the dead, "as in a figure."

Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ, as *the risen one*, is the open fountain of all blessing to the creature; and all salvation is new creation in him.

(3) *And the prince of the kings of the earth.*] This title, again, flows from the same source as the former ones. See chap. xvii. 14. Even now, Christ is a king; but his manifestation and actual authority, as such, is suspended. The kings of the earth recognize him not, and even in some cases, boast of deriving their authority and power from the people. But although impunity now attends this awful sacrilege, a time will come when Christ will assert his right, and when every

knee shall bow to him. Psalm ii. refers to this assertion of his right.

The Apostle cannot close the enumeration of these titles of Christ, nor ought we our contemplation of them, without deep emotions of adoration rising within his breast. Wherefore, he now bursts forth into the doxology which follows:—
“*Unto him,*” &c.

The wondrous things he had come into contact with in receiving this Revelation, seem to have moulded his emotions into a corresponding form, just as the brazen mirror of old reflected its lustre on the beholder; for it is to be observed, that this is almost the same language we find uttered by the glorified saints, chap. v. 9, 10.

This shews us the tendency of the study of this book, if read aright. John was not puffed up with head knowledge, in consequence of what he heard and saw, but filled with devout admiration. And the person and grace of the Lord Jesus are his all-absorbing topics. He mentions not his name formally, but chooses rather to describe him by what he had done and suffered; and herein will consist the Saviour’s glorious distinction throughout eternity.

Unto him that hath loved us.] Observe the emphatic condensation; just as Paul says, “Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it.” Eph. v. 25.

And hath washed us from our sins in his own blood.] This seems to be an allusion to the process of consecration to the typical Aaronic priesthood. The priests, the sons of Aaron, were washed before entering on their duties. See Ex. xxix. 4; and xl. 30—32.

Ver. 6. *And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.]* Here is pourtrayed the high calling of Christians; kings, to reign; priests, to bless; associated with Christ in his benignant government of a happy universe; sharers and helpmeets in the dominion of the second Adam. As *Eve* was formed for the first Adam out of his side, so *they* are now being taken out of the bleeding side of Jesus, to be presented to him at his second coming, “a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

Remember, child of God, this is the inheritance to which you are born, or rather, born again,—participation in the very glory of CHRIST. It doth not yet appear, indeed, what you shall be; your dignity is now hidden; but one day you will shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of your Father. Oh! it is because this hope of God’s children is not realized by them as it should be, that they are so lean and depressed. Were their affections intelligently fixed on these heavenly things, which God hath prepared for them, their glowing language would oftener be that of the

beloved disciple, praising and adoring that glorious Saviour, by whom they are brought nigh to God.

To him be glory.] The glory of an object is its effulgence, what the very manifestation of it involves. And as, without Christ, “was not any thing made that was made,”—anything to reflect his glory; so, to him, as the great Revealer of God, the Divine kaleidoscope, as it were, all glory belongs. “*Out of God, (ἐξ αὐτοῦ)* and *through* God, and *to* God, are all things,” (Romans xi. 36) and JESUS CHRIST is their way of issue, and of return. Through him, all glory is exhaled from the boundless ocean of the great “I AM,” and through him it is rendered back; as we read, “JESUS CHRIST LORD, UNTO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER.” Phil. ii. 11.

And dominion.] The meaning of this word is best seen, from its use in Eph. vi. 10, “be strong in the Lord, and in *the power of his might.*” There it is translated “power,” and conjoined with “might;” it signifies the *potency or efficacy of power.* Whatever of this, accordingly, pervades the system of creation, in all its complexity of operations, has its seat and centre in the glorious person of the Lord Jesus; “BY HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST.” Col. i. 17.

For ever and ever.] Literally, for ages of ages; the expression for eternity. See ch. x. 6, xx. 10; and xxii. 5.

Amen.] i. e. So be it. Thus the Apostle adds his deep and hearty echo to the foregoing ascription. And to sympathy in this, must come all creaturehood that will be saved. Disaffection to it, is the rock upon which Satan split; for “he abode not in the truth,” i. e. “the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus.” And so will it be with all who perish. See John viii. 44; Eph. iii. 11.

Ver. 7. *Behold, he cometh with clouds.*] If we bear in mind that the titles John gives to the three persons in the Godhead, and his adoration just noticed, were *taken from the visions which he saw*, the inference must commend itself to us, that the celebration of his advent in glory, which he gives here, must have been inspired within him from the same source. And what confirms this view is, a comparison of verses eight and eleven; the former, which alike belongs to the Apostle’s exordium, and consists of a description of Christ, being also taken from what John had heard from Christ himself—verse 11. The echo, as it were, of the very titles assumed by our Lord, seems to be here falling on John’s ears.

It is also natural, that there should be a congruity between the contents of the book, and its *motto*, which this seventh verse seems to constitute.

But to proceed, the coming of Christ “with clouds,” which is here celebrated, is not to be confounded with the gathering of the saints unto

him, which takes place previously; and we know not by what duration. For, see 1 Thessalonians iv. Having said in verse 15, “we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (i. e. anticipate) them which are asleep;” the Apostle continues in verse 17, “we shall be caught up together with them, *in the clouds*, to meet the Lord in the air.” Observe, “*to meet the Lord.*” The Lord will descend from heaven to gather his saints, and they will “then” be caught up to *meet* him. The period that will intervene between this rapture of the saints, and the Lord’s coming afterwards “with clouds,” is uncertain. But the distinctness between the two events may be illustrated by what is related of the brethren going to meet Paul on his way to Rome. They went to meet him as far as Appii Forum, and the Three Taverns, respectively distant from Rome, sixty and thirty miles, and then returned to Rome with him. See Acts xxviii. 15. There was an interval between their meeting him, and their return to Rome with him; and during this interval they were with him. So, at the coming of Christ, there will be his coming *for* his saints, his *παρουσία*, and then his coming *with* them, his *ἐπιφάνεια*, when he will be visible to the world.

To this latter coming, the reference is here; as also in our Lord’s reply to Caiaphas—“Nevertheless,” that is, ‘notwithstanding the forlorn

humiliating condition in which I now appear,' "ye," the Jewish nation, "shall see the Son of man. coming in the clouds of heaven." Matt. xxvi. 64. This description strikingly agrees with that of John, "Behold he cometh with clouds."

And every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.] That is, the nations congregated against Jerusalem, at that crisis, shall behold him, but especially, and above all, shall *they* behold him who pierced him,—his own nation.

The wailing here referred to, or *mourning*, as it is in Zechariah, will be of a gracious, penitent character. See Zechariah xii. 9, 10. It will be bitter, even as when "one mourneth for his only son, and is in bitterness for his first-born;" calling to our minds the record of the mourning in Egypt at the Exodus of Israel, when, upon the death of the first-born, from every homestead in that land, one simultaneous cry ascended from the anguished parent.

All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.] i. e. The mourning in question shall be so intense, that "each family in the land shall mourn apart;" for the words here translated "tribe" and "earth," are the same which are used by the Septuagint in Zechariah, and we may give them the same translation. True, at this awful crisis, there will also be a mourning

amongst apostates, those who will have worshipped the beast, and received his mark. But a spirit of grace and supplication will, it appears, be poured upon the spared nucleus of the Jewish nation, and they will be led graciously to mourn.

Even so, Amen.] Thus John enters into the mind of God, and breathes forth his fervent aspiration after the same consummation. This again evinces the practical import of the study of this book, as inspiring us with sympathy with our Great Head, and devout appreciation of the Divine purpose concerning him, when he shall be brought again into the world; the great ordinance of God for establishing the earth in blessedness, and fulfilling the decrees of many generations.

We next come to the titles of Christ, which John gathered, as already observed, from the voice which had sounded in his ears. Verse 11.

Ver. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega.*] These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. And what is the power of letters? Are they not the root of all actual intelligence between man and man? Thus, then, Christ is the great depositary of intelligence, and organ of communication between God and man. He contains all that is comprehensible of God by the creature.

Hence, also, he is emphatically called, "*the Word,*" for a word is the exponent of the invisible idea in the mind. See on v. 5.

The beginning and the ending.] This is not to be confounded with the import of “Alpha and Omega.” This latter signifies, that all knowledge is centered in Christ. But “the beginning and the ending” refer to all time and space; that is, all varieties, diversities, and changes, which have or will run their course, find their boundaries in the secret of his glorious person, set up from everlasting, and to be brought forth in glory at his second advent.

Which is, and which was, and which is to come.] Literally, ‘the is, the was, and the coming one.’ This title has the same signification as the last, only more extended. John had applied it (ver. 4) to God the Father; and its application now to Christ, reiterates the truth that we can only know God in him. And so we are instructed, that in studying the Scriptures, in order to the knowledge of the absolute Godhead standing in the person of the Father, we should contemplate the lineaments of THE CHRIST, in whom alone the disclosure is given. Thus, from God in Revelation, limiting himself to come within our ken, we climb up to the conception, and worship of God, incomprehensible, “whom no man hath seen or can see.” If we desired to give a child an idea of the earth we live on, we should place a globe before him, that by this visible representation, his apprehension of the subject might be aided.

In like manner, we should ever set Christ before us—bend all our efforts to the study of Him, that we may grow in the knowledge of the true God. As our Lord himself states it, “this is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” John xvii. 3. Essential Deity is an expanse too vast for the creature to penetrate into. But in Jesus, THE CHRIST OF GOD, we have the sensible horizon we need; and an ever widening one, as our capacity of vision becomes enlarged.

The Almighty.] See on the word “*dominion*,” in the doxology, ver. 6; for this is a compound of the simple term there used. We are taught by it, that the efficacy of Christ’s power is *universally* penetrating; that, as THE CHRIST—for it is in this relation the title is given to him—He is the Executive of the Omnipotence of absolute God-head.

Reader! be much in prayer that you may receive these “things of God” in a right spirit; and that while they are presented to you, your heart and conscience may be at work, as well as your intellect. For, if the intellect only be exercised, there will be produced a mere mental intoxication, a proud headiness of knowledge—stumbling to your brethren in Christ, to whose enlargement in the truth your attainments ought to conduce—and unprofitable to yourselves. At the foot of the

cross it is, (with a crucified spirit, not only to the lusts of the flesh, but to those of the *mind*,) that we should enquire into all that belongs to our God. This is the way to enjoy sanctifying communion with Him on every subject.

Rev. 1. 1856.

CHAPTER I.

SECTION THIRD.

Verses 9—11.

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

It has been already observed, that John proceeded formally to enter upon his communication to the seven Churches, at the fourth verse. But, having in his inscription made mention of the Father, the Holy Ghost, and Christ—the great Revealer of God, he could not contain the adoring love which

filled his heart, but bursts out into the doxology, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood: &c.” thus using the very words with which he had heard, in vision, the glorified saints utter their praises around the throne. See chap. v. 10. His mind, in fact, was engrossed with the glorious triumph of redeeming grace. Accordingly, from the commencement, this theme seems to impart its character to the book; as appears also still more prominently in the sentence with which, by way of motto, John closes his doxology—“Behold he cometh with clouds!” Does not this confirm the view already gathered of the book, from its very title, “the *Revelation*,” or unveiling of Jesus Christ. Are not *title*, *doxology*, and *motto*, all in exact keeping with the estimate of the second Advent times, as constituting the period of these visions? This is the more to be regarded, because of the wrong impression which is prevalent on the subject. All our popular commentators having assumed, that the Revelation is a continuous history of the Church of God, occupying the whole interval between the Advents. But to proceed,

Ver. 9. “*I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.*”] In the second verse, John had described himself thus—“who bare record of the word of God, and

of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even all things that he saw." Now, resuming his description, he calls himself the "*brother*" of those to whom he writes; and not merely a brother, as related to Christ, but a brother in actual sympathy, their "*companion in tribulation*;" for such is the law of discipleship, and it will especially operate in the latter days—the scene of the visions of this book—when there will be so much to undergo for the sake of Christ. But, observe the comfort he suggests to his brethren under their tribulation, by connecting it with "*the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*." Their waiting and suffering he thus intimates, would at last be crowned with glory; the end would be "an abundant entrance" into the kingdom of their Lord and Saviour.

Again, how soothing to his brethren the further consideration which the Apostle's language implies, that whatever they may endure till the kingdom comes, they will endure in sympathy with Jesus; for *He* also is waiting in "patience" at the right hand of God, "expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." Then, both he and his saints will rejoice together. Thus we may understand how the hope of the believer—"the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." (Matt. xiii. 44);—for, the glory

is hidden under the reproach and suffering of this dispensation ; all which, however, is cheerfully borne by the saints, for the sake of the joyful issue which they ultimately expect. Yea, they part with all of *this present life*, that they may purchase the hopeful field ; like Moses, esteeming “ the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.” Or like Christ himself, the great prototype of the life of faith, “ who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God.” Heb. xii. 2: In a word, the child of God waits, and suffers patiently, because he looks for the kingdom ; and so, when John describes himself as here, in relation to the seven Churches, it is as their “ brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.”

What a difference between the state of mind which this argues, and the prevailing estimate of their calling among believers of the present day ? How few, now, describing themselves as Christians, would select these things as their characteristics,—‘ patience in tribulation, and expectation of the kingdom of Christ !’ Alas ! the hope of the kingdom, and with it the hardihood of the Christian warfare, has well nigh died out of the Church’s experience ! And yet, the contemplation of the coming glory, as that which sustained the saints

under tribulation, was not peculiar to John. By the same topic, we find Peter animating his brethren, in 1 Pet. iv. 13. He there calls upon them to “rejoice in being partakers of Christ’s sufferings ;” and why?—“that when his glory shall be revealed,” he adds, “ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” In the fifth chapter of this Epistle, the same frame of mind is evinced, when he describes himself “a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.”

Was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.] The popular view derived from this, is, that John was *banished* to Patmos on account of his preaching “the word of God, &c.” But on a comparison with this, of the second verse, an entirely different proposition is presented to us. For there, “the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ,” consist of *the things which John saw*; and how could he be banished to Patmos because of the things which he saw in Patmos? The simple truth is, he was in Patmos *in order to receive* “the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ”—even this very REVELATION. Attention has been already called (see on ver. 2) to the remarkable fact in the history of the Apostle Paul, of his going to *Arabia* for a similar purpose. See Gal. i. 17. In the twelfth verse he speaks of his

having been taught the Gospel which he preached, “*by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” Then, in the fifteenth verse—the intervening matter being parenthetical—resuming his allusion to this “*revelation,*” he recites, as one of the circumstantials connected with it, that he “went into Arabia.”*

Ver. 10. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.*] Literally, ‘I was in Spirit in the Lord's day;’ for there is no article in the original. The Apostle Paul, speaking of visions with which he had been favoured, and, probably, constituent parts of “the Revelation of Christ” shown to him, when he went to Arabia, (see on ver. 9.) says, “whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell,” 2 Cor. xii. 2. John seems to be more definite in the account of *his* experience; he was *in Spirit* on this occasion, equivalent, perhaps, to being “out of the body,” or being rendered independent of the body for the time. The same phrase (without the article) occurs again in chap. iv. 2; xvii. 3; xxi. 10. Of course, the agency of the Holy Ghost, as that by which John was put into this abnormal state, is also implied; (see Ezek. viii. 3; xi. 1.) so that the proposition is really a double one, ‘he was *in Spirit*, and *by the Spirit*, in the Lord's day.’

As to this latter expression, “*the Lord's day,*” considerable light is thrown on it from the first

* See Apocalyptic Interpretation, pp. 58, 59.

Epistle to the Corinthians. In the third chapter, we find, that a party spirit had crept into the Church at Corinth ; and it appears that Apollos, who had succeeded Paul in ministry there, had in some degree suffered himself to be the occasion of it. Accordingly, Paul, speaking of Jesus Christ, as the foundation laid by him in his preaching, intimates in a warning strain, the different kinds of superstructure which might be built thereon by the labours of his successors, as they were diligent, or otherwise. There might be “gold, silver, precious stones,” that is, genuine believers ; and “wood, hay, stubble”—spurious converts. But, what the character of the work really was, “*the day*” would declare—ver. 13. Now, what *day* is meant here? Evidently, the day of the Lord’s coming, that day to be “revealed by fire,” in which the spurious converts being destroyed, a proportionate loss of reward will accrue to their teachers, although the latter, as believers themselves, shall be saved. Indeed, it is distinctly explained in the context, (ch. iv. 5.) that “*the day*” here referred to, is the day of the Lord’s coming. This being the case, look to the same chapter, verse 3 :—“With me,” says the Apostle, “it is a very small matter that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment.” The literal translation of the word “judgment” in this verse, is “*day*,” and it is so rendered in the

margin. Our translators here have put *the thing* for *the time*. Thus, this whole dispensation, is *man's* day of judgment. Surely, then, the antithetical phrase, *Lord's* day, must mean the LORD's day of judgment. It is also remarkable, that it is the adjective form of the word man, (*human* day—*ἀνθρωπινή ἡμέρα*,) which is used 1 Cor. iii. 13, exactly answering to the peculiarity of expression here, where the adjective similarly occurs—(*κυριακή ἡμέρα*.) We have no alternative, therefore, but to understand both periods analogously.* Let it suffice to say, further, that the term employed here, "*Lord's day*," however commonly used among Christians, to designate the Christian Sabbath, is not once so used in the Scriptures. The expression for it is invariably "*the first day of the week*."

It is true, that for the common use of the term, the authority of one or two of the fathers, at the close of the second century, may be pleaded. But when we bear in mind, how soon corruption of the simple truth prevailed in this quarter, we ought to beware of placing any dependance upon it.

The import of the term, "*the Lord's day*," thus ascertained, is a key to the understanding of 2 Thes. ii. 1, &c., in a way, which had not before occurred to the Author; though, by another

* See "Apocalyptic Interpretation," page 78.

interpretation, he had arrived at the same end.* And it is an instance of how every little increment of knowledge, modifies our former views. In the first Epistle, the Apostle had comforted the Thessalonians under the bereavement which death had made among them, by the assurance that their departed brethren would lose nothing by having fallen asleep in Jesus; because God would bring them with Jesus at his coming again, when the living saints should also be caught up to meet Him in *the air*. Having thus distinctly set before the Thessalonians, as their blessed hope, *their* “gathering together unto Jesus,” ere he would appear to the world, the Apostle, in his second Epistle—the passage in question—resumes the subject with this exhortation, “Now we beseech you brethren, by (or concerning) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by (concerning) our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that *the day of Christ* is at hand.” In the most recent editions of the Greek Testament, after a careful collation of authorities, instead of the day of *Christ*, “the day of *the Lord*” is adopted. And, it is to be observed, that it is not the mere *proximity* of this day, of which the Apostle speaks, but *its alleged actual presence*. For, the word *here*

* See Lectures on Prophecy, pp. 220—223. Nisbet & Co.

rendered, "at hand," properly means '*is present;*' or '*has set in.*' It is remarkable, that this is the only place in the new Testament, in which the translators have rendered it "at hand." As a participle, it is five times translated, "*present.*" (Rom. viii. 38 ; 1 Cor. iii. 22 ; vii. 26 ; Gal. i. 4 ; Heb. ix. 9.) And in its strictly verbal form, it is rendered (2 Tim. iii. 1.) "shall *come.*" The expression, "*at hand,*" indeed, often occurs elsewhere in the New Testament, but it is the translation of another Greek word. The word here used, is invariably applied to denote *something already extant.* And this being predicated of "THE DAY OF THE LORD," that crisis, which is uniformly associated in Scripture, with the letting loose of the Divine judgments on the earth, no wonder that the allegation should have troubled the Thessalonians, who had been assured, on the contrary, as we have seen, that they would be caught up to Jesus *previously.* But the Apostle beseeches them, on no pretence to entertain such allegation, reminding them of what was to happen *first,* i. e. before "*the day of the Lord*" would set in. He then dismisses the subject, (ver. 15.) by inculcating implicit adherence to his former teaching, including that "by Epistle,"—even what he had taught in 1 Thes. iv. 17.

The key to the whole passage is, a definite apprehension of the term, "*the day of the Lord ;*"

and that it means a time distinct from, and posterior to, the coming of the Lord—for *the saints of this dispensation*.

Now to return to the point immediately before us—Being in the Spirit, or, as already suggested, taking it without the article, which is not in the original, being *in Spirit in the Lord's day*, i. e. the day of the Lord, John proceeds to relate what then transpired.

I heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet.] This reminds us of Paul, caught up into Paradise, and hearing unspeakable words. Only here, the words that fell on John's ears are recited.

Ver. 11. *I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.*] These are deeply pregnant words; and, repeated as they are, warrant the turning of our thoughts to them again. They belong not, then, the reader will remember, to the second Person of the Trinity, simply; but, to him, as THE CHRIST, or God-man, set up from everlasting. (See Prov. viii.) They betoken, that all God's purposes centre in Him; not only grace and providence, but also creation. The key to all knowledge, therefore, is acquaintance with the glorious Person of the Christ. Everything created,—men, angels, animate and inanimate nature,—were all conceived in Him, as the prolific womb of the divine mind; and to Him, except when superficially studied, they all bring us back. In fact, he is "THE WORD,"

the utterance of the infinite thought of God ; and from him, all genuine knowledge flows. It is needful to have a distinct perception of this great truth, that we may be able to expose the subtleties of our popular infidel writers, who, under the pretended authority of scientific discoveries, have revived the Atheistic notion, that creation has been a gradual work from the beginning, by natural laws ; for example, that organized bodies have been produced by electrical agency, from inorganic matter ; and that every lower organization has been but elemental to a higher, at length developed from it ; that the human species itself, the highest product, as yet, of this development, is still but a step in the series of progressions ! Accordingly, by one of these Sciolists it has been said, ‘ *if there be not a God now, there will be one bye and bye !*’

Such is the blasphemous perversion of the all-pervading unity, which is stamped upon the various works of God. Poor, blinded man ! he sees not the cause of this unity, even that all creation, from the beginning, had reference to Christ, the Archetype—by virtue of his predestined human nature, of every work of God ; that all things were created in Him, and by Him, and for Him—things in heaven, and things on earth ; that He is the head of the whole creation ; in which, truly, the principle of *development* obtains,

but, in the way of *descending downwards from Him*, to the very lowest organization; *not* ascending upwards. As a grand key, therefore, to the phenomena which stumble the profane thinkers of the day, let us hold fast *this* truth—that in the God-man, set up from everlasting, lies the all-comprehending device of Godhead, for its own glory. And thus, as we read here, the Lord Jesus is the “Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.” (See on ver. 8.) The voice continues—

And, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven Churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.] The things which the Apostle saw, consist of all that is contained in this book; and the whole is addressed to these seven Churches. “*What thou seest,*” evidently means here, ‘*what thou shalt see;*’ for at this exact moment, John had not had any vision presented to him. But, presently, he has such in the seven golden candlesticks, and the other visions which follow. Nor is it unusual for the present tense to be employed to denote a *certain* future. See John xxi. 23; Matt. xxvii. 63.

The number of the Churches being “SEVEN”, is no doubt significant of instruction being intended beyond these Asiatic gatherings; for it is expressive of complex unity. The harmonies of nature, for

instance, range under this number seven; of so many elements, light and sound being composed. And thus it is used in the account of the creation; in that one work, there having been seven successive acts. Thus, under these seven Churches, besides the specialty of reference, which, of course, attaches to the localities mentioned, there is comprehended, I doubt not, every phase of the Catholic Church throughout this dispensation; yea, and every individual member of that Church can find his generic likeness in the character of one or other of these Churches.

But whilst admitting, and even contending for this representative aspect of the seven Churches at all times, we must carefully remember, that, touching the point of strict *interpretation*, they relate only to the future; that is, they are Churches which shall be found in those several cities in Asia, at the close of this dispensation, when *the Lord's day* shall have set in. They will be composed, it is submitted, of an election of believing Jews, (chap. xii. 17.) the chief witnesses for the truth then left on the earth, to conflict with the power and pretensions of the Antichrist. That Christian Churches existed in these several places, in John's days; and, that the Epistles *lighted* on them, as a proximate stage, may be admitted; though there is grave reason for with-holding our assent from this proposition, if

so disposed. But, with the clear and satisfactory evidence before us, of the import of “*the Lord’s day*,” in which John, in spirit, saw these Churches, we occupy impregnable ground in maintaining, that it is not any historical existence they have had, which satisfies the Spirit’s contemplation of them here; any more than Jerusalem, besieged by the Romans, satisfies our Lord’s prophecy in the 24th of Matthew; but that we must look for them to stand in their places in that portentous time which is coming, preparation for which seems already to be making in the general revival of the countries of the East.

But now, let us not forget what was necessary before John could receive the communications before us; he had to be taken out of himself, so to speak—to be “*in the Spirit*.” Can *we*, then, enter aright on a study of the subject, and not be in special communion with God? And let this thought affect the unconverted reader. If you would profit by these truths, you must, in the first place, submit to God, and be reconciled to him. Then, taking the place of children at his feet; washed in the blood of Christ, elect kings and priests with Him to God; you will be able to profit, and have your souls refreshed and enlarged by the truths here presented to you; you will, as it were, read the description of the preferment God has entailed on you—your future estate.

But, if you enter not thus upon the subject, be assured, it will prove dry and uninteresting to you; unless, indeed, you take it up as you would a romance—and by this means, also, let it be remembered, Satan knows how to ensnare souls. Alas! on every side there is disaster likely to ensue to him who walks not with God, either in his total neglect, or abuse of this book. May we all then realize, and be steadfast in the assurance of, the *grace* which God has given us in Jesus Christ. Then, in this REVELATION, shall we enjoy the thrilling description of that *glory* with which God will crown his work.

Dec. 1, 1856.

CHAPTER I.

SECTION FOURTH.

Verses 12--20.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are and the things which shall be hereafter;

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

THE preceding exposition brought us to the contemplation of the inspired Seer, transported *in Spirit* and *by the Spirit* to “the Lord’s day,” a yet future period, as we have seen. In this position, he heard behind him the voice as of a great trumpet, the utterance of the Lord Jesus commissioning him to write this book, and send it to the seven Churches in Asia. From this point, we now come to pursue the subject; and the first thing for us to consider, is, the vision which John saw.

Ver. 12. *I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, one like unto the Son of Man.*] The seven candlesticks were the symbols of the seven Churches, to whom John was to send the record of what he saw. This is explicitly stated in chap. i. 20, “The mystery of the seven stars which thou

sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches.”

Now let us ask, what should the vision of *seven candlesticks* suggest to our mind? Should we not at once associate it with the *seven branched candlestick* in the holy place of the Tabernacle, which, as a standing memorial of the Divine purpose, represented the calling of the Jewish nation to be in the midst of the earth, as they shall be, eventually, the depositaries and communicators of the knowledge of God amongst the nations. Certainly, the latter emblem cannot so well, if at all legitimately, be applied to set forth the Church of this dispensation—“the body of Christ;” for their place belongs to “*the Holiest of all,*” represented, as we find, by the Cherubim of gold, beaten out of the same mass with the Mercy-seat. Indeed, the whole scene of these seven candlesticks, with the Lord Jesus as the High Priest walking in their midst, has arrested the attention of various writers to the circumstantials of Jewish worship. Amongst others, Sir Isaac Newton, forcibly struck by the coincidence, thus records his vivid impression. “The temple is the scene of these visions, and the visions in the temple relate to the feasts of the seventh month. For the feasts of the Jews were typical of things to

come. The passover related to the first coming of Christ: therefore his first coming being over before this prophecy was given, the feasts of the seventh month only are here alluded to. On the first day of that month, in the morning, the High Priest dressed the lamps; and *in allusion* hereunto, this prophecy begins with a vision of one like the Son of Man, in the High Priests habit; appearing, as it were, in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, or over against the midst of them, dressing the lamps, which appeared like a rod of seven stars in his right hand; and this dressing was performed by the sending of seven Epistles to the Angels, or Bishops, of the seven Churches.”*

The suggestion of this learned writer, that the aspect of this vision looks to the High Priest, dressing the lamps of the candlestick on the first morning of the seventh month, (for he performed this office, it appears, every morning, see Lev. xxiv. 3, 4; therefore, of course he did it on that particular morning) may be followed out with much interest, in connection with the view here taken, of the seven Churches being gatherings of Jewish saints in the day of the Lord, like what the Church at Pentecost was; for, since Pentecost, the course of the Jewish feasts has been interrupted by the development of the mystery of this

* Observations on the Apocalypse of St. John, by Sir Isaac Newton.

dispensation, on the ripening of which into its place in the heavens, with Jesus, it is natural the channel should again be formed in Jews, for the feasts to flow on.

The difference, however, between one seven branched candlestick, the evident symbol of the Jewish nation, and seven distinct candlesticks, which we have here, is, of course, designed to suggest to us some further instruction. What may this be? I submit whether it be not to indicate, that whilst gatherings of *Jews* are here contemplated, we are to regard them, as not in the organized condition that awaits *the nation* in their land, but still prospective of it, just as if these seven candlesticks were the seven distinct lamps of the one seven branched candlestick, in transition towards their original incorporation on the one common stem. Accordingly, they have their unity, not in the central place, Jerusalem, where yet the Lord will again place his name, but in the Person of the Lord Jesus, walking in their midst. In fact, the whole scene may be regarded as portraying the buddings forth of the Jewish fig tree, in those several places enumerated, in the East; preliminary, as they will be, to the full re-organization of Israel in their own land, when the seven candlesticks will become visibly one, according to the original emblem.

That such gatherings of Jews—believers in Messiah, whilst yet distinct from the mystery of this dispensation, should be denominated Churches, ought not to present a difficulty to the reception of this view; for Israel at large, after being brought out from Egypt, is called by Stephen, “*the Church in the wilderness.*” And, what should not a little confirm the inference of their being Jewish gatherings, suggested by the significancy of the Jewish emblem, “*seven candlesticks*”—is, that the representative of each gathering, is called “*the Angel of the Church,*” synonymous with the SHELIACH ZIBBOR, or presiding officer in the Jewish synagogue of old.* It is certainly worthy of remark, touching the popular notion, that “*Angel*” is but another expression for *Bishop*, that no sanction can be derived for it from a collation of the five places where Bishops are admitted to be spoken of. See Acts xx. 28; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 7: 1 Pet. ii. 25. In no instance here, is the word *Angel* employed.

Moreover, it is further significant, that in the Epistle of James, which is addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, James i. 1; and

* “Next to the *Archisunagogos*, was an officer, whose province it was to offer up public prayer to God for the whole congregation, and who, on that account, was called *Sheliach Zibbor*, the angel of the Church, because, as their messenger, he spoke to God for them.”—*Jenning’s Jewish Antiquities.*

which bears many internal marks of belonging to the latter day, we read of the “synagogue” being resorted to, as though such Jewish form of assembly will then be revived, with its “uppermost seats;” some sitting, as it were, “under the footstool of others.” James ii. 2. 3. This may be said to be arguing from a mere word; but, when it is remembered, that this word “*synagogue*” occurs elsewhere in the New Testament, no less than fifty four times; and, in every case relates to the meeting place for Jewish devotion, it is rather unreasonable to suppose, that it has another and more equivocal signification here.

On every account, then, first, it being *the day of the Lord*, in which the Churches were seen by John; secondly, the Jewish character, both of the *symbols* employed—“seven candlesticks;” and of the representative officer addressed—“the Angel;” and, thirdly, its congruity with allusions to the future in other portions of the word, which will multiply as we proceed, I have no hesitation in commending to the adoption of the reader, the *prophetic-Jewish* character of these Epistles, as the key to their right understanding.

But meanwhile, they are full of instructive application to the present intervening period. Observe, for example in general, there was but *one* Church for each city. And so there ought to be now, but one Church in every place, i. e.

there ought to be a visible union characterizing Christians. There is vital unity amongst the members of Christ, but that is not enough ; there ought to be a manifestation of it in *union*, so that the world may see it. Alas ! how lamentable the absence of this union ; and still more, that the very elements of it, those idiosyncracies, which more or less belong to all Christians, are perverted into pretexts for its opposite, schism and dissent. Look at the Church of Rome in the time of Paul. There were within it persons of various spiritual complexions and attainments ; some ate meat, others scrupled to do so ; some observed days, others neglected them. There was all this variety of disposition and predilection, yet it was not made the occasion for division. And why is not the same the case now ? Just because, on the one side there has been too much exacting ; and on the other, too much scrupulosity. Thus, when two thousand ministers left the Church of England, because they would not wear a surplice, and for such other things, there was exhibited the lamentable intolerance of the Ecclesiastical party, in sternly insisting on such indifferent matters ; while at the same time, the resistance of the Nonconformists, just because the imposition *was* in indifferent matters, is equally to be deprecated. In fact, we are all to blame on the subject, Churchmen and Dissenters, and the recognition

of this fact, next to that mutual secretion of love, without which, all adjustment of terms of communion must ever prove abortive, is, doubtless, under God, the best preliminary to the restoration of genuine Christian union.

As to our Lord's position, "in the midst of the candlesticks," that is, being their centre of union; this also is applicable to the whole Catholic Church—He is their great Head, in relation to whom they are mutually united to each other. The Jewish Church of old had their centre of unity, *visible*, in the person of the High Priest, and in the place—Jerusalem, where God had put his name. But now it is different, the Church's Head is *invisible*—even Jesus; and only by the eye of faith, is their incorporation into so excellent a body, discerned or appreciated. Imposing splendour of place, and office, as in the temple and Priesthood of old, and its sorry counterpart now—the Judaic pretensions of the Pope and Church of Rome—consists not with the calling and worship of the saints under this dispensation. We should remember, on this point, what our Lord's language was to the woman of Samaria:—"The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." John iv. 21, 23. Now, the

time here referred to, is extant under this present dispensation.* Accordingly, during it, there is no holy person or holy place to circumscribe our devotion; but wherever two or three are met together in the name of Jesus—there, He is in the midst, their “mercy seat;” as it is well put in those familiar words,—

“Where’er they seek him, he is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”

Of this truth, it is important to have a clear discernment at the present crisis; for, by a late popular minister of the Church of England, who, alas! apostatized to the Church of Rome, it has been avowed, that he was influenced to such step, by observing, that—except in the person of the Pope, and his universal supremacy—the Christian Church was destitute of everything like a visible antitype of the Jewish High Priest! Thus, did this brother fall a prey to the delusion of the day, because he was ignorant of this grand characteristic difference between the Jewish dispensation and ours; and that by their *contrast*, in this respect, as well as others, not their *analogy*, should the present Church of God be instructed. And, let us be assured, the time is at hand, when, if we are not intelligent in the Word of God, we shall become similarly ensnared by the great Deceiver.

* See more on this subject, in “*The Tabernacle a Witness for God.*” A Tract by the Author.—Nisbet & Co., London.

We now come to the glorious vision presented to the Apostle, verses 13—16. He sees the Lord Jesus Christ in his High Priestly apparel, not as he presents himself before God, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which case his dress would have been different; but as engaged in service before the people, having come forth, as it were, from the presence of God.

If we examine, we shall see a remarkable parallelism between this portraiture by John, and that recorded in Daniel's vision, ch. x. 5, &c. For example,—

Ver. 13. *Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*] These were parts of the High Priest's apparel; the first, the long robe, *which extended to the feet*; whence also, as significant of this, it is called by one word in the original, (ποδήρη); the same word which is employed in the Septuagint translation of Zech. iii. 4, "I will clothe thee with a *change of raiment.*" The other, "the golden girdle," was "the curious girdle of the ephod," which encircled the body twice, and was suspended from the breast. Ex. xxxix. 5. Correspondingly with this, Daniel says, "Then I lifted up mine eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man *clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz.*" Dan. x. 5.

Ver. 14. *His head and hairs were white like wool, as white as snow.*] This identifies the Lord Jesus as essentially one with the Father, whom, as “the Ancient of days,” Daniel in another vision similarly describes, “I beheld,” he says, “till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool.” Dan. vii. 9.

Under this quality, “white,” alike emphatically predicated of the Father and Christ, perhaps we should discern the symbol (1) of the unbroken light of Godhead, as standing in the Person of the former, irrespective of manifestation; and (2) of that same light, with all its rays gathered back, after manifestation, into their focus of glory, in the Person of the latter. For in both cases, that of the original composition and combination of the Solar rays, the colour *white* obtains.

And his eyes were as a flame of fire.] To the same effect records Daniel, “his eyes as lamps of fire.” Dan. x. 6.

Ver. 15. *And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.*] So Daniel, “his feet like in colour to polished brass.” Dan. x. 6.

And his voice as the sound of many waters.] A similar image occurs in Daniel, “and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.” Dan. x. 6.

Ver. 16. *And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*] So Daniel, “*his face as the appearance of lightning.*” Dan. x. 6.

The effect of these visions, also, upon both parties, was similar. John relates,—

Ver. 17. *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.*] In like manner, Daniel says, “I saw this great vision, and *there remained no strength in me.*” Dan. x. 8. Again,—both were revived, and comforted by the same mode of communication,—

Ver. 17, 18. *And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not ; I am the first and the last : I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death.*] (Compare Dan. x. 10—12.) Thus John is soothed, not only by the Lord’s words, but by his *touch*. And there was something very tender in this action. John might have been incredulous of the voice which spake, being that of his beloved Master ; falling upon his ears, as it did, amidst such terrifying circumstances. At least, he might have doubted for the moment, whether, indeed, the humanity of Jesus was not so overlaid by His glory, as to suppress its sympathizing emotions.

But all suspicions of the kind must have been dissipated, when, together with saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last : I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for

evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death," He laid his composing hand upon the dismayed disciple. The word translated "hell," is *hades* ; it is not the place of torment, but of *departed spirits*. And "death" here signifies the receptacle of the grave, where are the *bodies* of the dead. The title thus assumed by our Lord, seems designed, in keeping with his consolatory address and action, to assure John, that no matter what the extremity, to which the sufferings of his faithful disciples might proceed, amidst the woes coming on Israel, He yet was able to deliver ; yea, and in his own blessed Person, *as living out of death*, was an assurance and encouragement to their faith, that they should be delivered ; and that—as he had said before—the gates of Hades should not prevail against His Church. Matt. xvi. 18.

Such is the weighty import of the communication made to John ; upon which, his consternation is removed. Into the minute details of this glorious vision of the Person of Christ, the reader is not now led. Let it suffice, for the present, to have compared DANIEL'S vision with JOHN'S ; and to observe that the glory displayed, was of a like character in both cases—portending judgment upon the Jews ; which also may account for the overwhelming dismay which affected these servants of God. In going over the addresses to the

“seven Churches,” there will be occasion to refer to the subject again. It will then be seen, how the several features in this glorious vision of the Lord Jesus, are pregnant with instruction to the child of God; intimating, that whatever be his condition, there is that in the Person of Christ, the knowledge of which is suited to his case, either in the way of wholesome comfort, or stimulus.

But there is one more parallel between these visions, which should be especially remarked, namely, the *period of time* with which they are both associated. DANIEL was then told what should *befall his people in the latter days*. Dan. x. 14. And JOHN, as we have seen, beheld all these things, being in Spirit “*in the Lord’s day*.” This confirms the position already advanced, that “the Lord’s day” is not the first day of the week, but the time of the Lord’s judgment, which will “first begin at the House of God,”—these “seven Churches,” or future gatherings of Jewish saints in Asia-Minor.

Ver. 19. *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.*] Such are the renewed instructions issued to John concerning this book. They seem to give the aspect of a three-fold division to it, which has misled many in its interpretation. But the translation needs a slight emendation,

which being made, the division becomes, in reality, only two-fold—"Write the things which thou hast seen—*both* the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter," or *after them*. The first clause, the "*things which thou hast seen*," as is manifest from verse 11, is characteristic of the contents of the *whole* book ; that is, the vision of the seven Churches and their angels, with Christ's pourtrayed actings *to* and *for* them, form a condensed summary of this "Revelation"—all that follows being, more or less, an expansion of its several features. And as the beholder of an accurately devised frontispiece to any historical volume might be said to see the events recited in such volume ; so, in the vision presented to John, he saw, prophetically, *all that was to transpire*. The emphasis is thus laid, to remind the reader of the force of the fact, not to be 'overlooked, that "John was in Spirit, *in the Lord's day*," when he saw this vision.

Accordingly, under this general head, *the things which John saw*, comes the distribution of the subject, in the clauses following, "*the things which are*," and "*the things which shall be after them* ;" the former referring to the position of the seven Churches, as extant in "THE LORD'S DAY ;" the latter, to what will happen to those Churches, in their various connexions with Antichrist, the nations, Babylon, &c., *during the course of that*

day. The three first Chapters relate to one division, presenting to us these Churches in *existence*; the other commences with Chapter four, and, with occasional recapitulations of the past, continues to the end.

Thus there is no reason for separating, as is generally done, the circumstances of the “seven Churches” mentioned in the Epistles, from the subsequent part of the book. On the contrary, they blend into each other, and form one grand perspective of the future; as may be seen from a comparison of the following passages. Ch. ii. 3, with ch. xiii. 10, xiv. 12; ch. ii. 9, 10, with ch. xiii. 5—8; ch. ii. 13, with ch. xiii. 2, xvi. 10; ch. ii. 16, with ch. xix. 21; ch. ii. 18, with ch. xix. 15; ch. ii. 20—23, with ch. xvii. 2, 4, xviii. 3; ch. iii. 3, with ch. xvi. 15; ch. iii. 12, with ch. xxi. 2; ch. iii. 21, with ch. xx. 4. Other parallels might be adduced; but the prosecution of this point is left to the reader.

Ver. 20. *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches.*] The vision of the stars and candlesticks would seem now to have dissolved from before John; just as in connexion with the scene of the Transfiguration, it is recorded, that when the terrified disciples

lifted up their eyes, “they saw no man, save Jesus only.” Matt. xvii. 8. Moses and Elias had disappeared. How, then, does the Lord speak of these symbols and their import? With a discrimination to be reverently noticed. For we find the definite article used in the designation of the former, and omitted in the latter. The words are literally, ‘the seven stars are *Angels* of the seven Churches, and the seven candlesticks are *seven Churches*.’

The implication is at once suggested, that both Angels and Churches had not, at that precise time, the actual existence contemplated in the vision, but pointed onwards to the future. The mode of expression is exactly that which obtains in Joseph’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream, “The seven good kine are seven years ; and the seven good ears are seven years.” Gen. xli. 26. Here the article is similarly used and omitted, (and it is the same in the Septuagint) specifying the emblems which Pharaoh saw, “*the* seven good kine,”—“*the* seven good ears ;” but leaving their signified period *indefinite*, to suit the future,—“*are seven years*” . . . “*are seven years ;*” and so it follows, verse 29, “*Behold there come* seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt.” With this clear precedent for such construction, what forbids it, to take our Lord’s words, “the seven candlesticks are seven Churches,”

as equivalent to the proposition—‘*there come seven Churches?*’ On the other hand, if these Churches existed, *as contemplated*, at the time our Lord spoke, is it not incongruous to suppose, that they would be indefinitely denominated, without the article—“*seven Churches?*”

As a sequel to these brief hints on the structure and chronological aspect of the book before us—the point will come under notice again—let the reader be reminded of what should be his frame and temper, whilst studying its contents; even that of the reconciled, blood-washed child of God, interested in all the disclosures of his heavenly Father’s will; so that his knowledge may yield him blessed material for communion with God, and intelligent devotion to his service.

It was once alleged, by way of complaint, against a Minister of Christ, that by dwelling on the subject of prophecy, he had his people, ‘always in the skies.’ But it ought to be the greatest commendation of both Minister and people, to be *in the skies*; and if we be risen with Christ, we shall be so; our affections will be fixed on heavenly things—things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Col. iii. 1, 2. As has been said by a departed saint,—“the Christian is not one who looks up to heaven from earth, but one, who, being in heaven, looks down upon earth.” Oh! that our contemplation of

these things may lead to this experience. And, like John, filled with what he saw, may we be ever ready to exclaim, for the awakening of the sleepy world around us, “ *Behold he cometh !* ”

Dec. 1. 1856.

CHAPTER II.

SECTION FIRST.

Verses 1—7.

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks ;

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil : and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars :

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4 Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches ; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

THE reader will bear in mind what has been

already observed, generally, about the seven Churches ; namely, that, admitting there were Christian communities in the several cities named, in the days of John, and that these Epistles were very profitable to them, as, also, to the whole Catholic Church since ; still, their *interpretation* must be referred to Churches peculiarly constituted at a yet future period. Just as our Lord's prophecy on the Mount of Olives, Mat. xxiv., may be said to *touch* upon the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans ; but, if we examine it carefully, we shall find such event does not satisfy all the particulars of the prophecy ; thus indicating that the fulfilment which our Lord contemplated, is yet to come. But if for the alleged futurity of these Churches, one simple precise reason be demanded, I at once go beyond the general argument taken from the Epistles, which sufficiently stamp them as prophetic, and reiterate the fact, that John saw the candlesticks which symbolized these Churches, when he was "*in Spirit in the Lord's day,*" or "DAY OF THE LORD"—that period of darkness and trouble, which, like a shadow cast before, will precede the actual coming of the Lord, with all his saints.

This significant intimation, of itself, warrants us to expect that there will be an establishment, or revival of these Churches, in that great crisis which is at hand.

With this brief recapitulation, let us now consider the Epistle to the Church of Ephesus. In that city, we have palpable Scriptural evidence of the past existence of a Church. In Acts xviii. we are informed how the Gospel was introduced into it. Paul went there with Aquila and Priscilla; and “entering into the synagogue, he reasoned with the Jews.” Amidst much opposition his testimony was blessed, and a little band of disciples was formed, who, it appears, entreated Paul to remain longer with them. ver. 20. To this he could not accede, but left Aquila and Priscilla there. We then read of Apollos, “an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures,” coming and teaching at Ephesus; but having only an imperfect knowledge of the truth, (“knowing only the baptism of John.”) The christian couple just named, who were left to watch over the infant Church, “took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.”

Then, in the nineteenth chapter, we find Paul at Ephesus again:—“Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus, and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.” The word *given* ought to have been supplied at the end of this last verse, as in John vii. 39, “for the

Holy Ghost was not yet *given*." The Christian disciples at Ephesus had not heard whether there were any Holy Ghost *given*. At length, being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, they were sealed with the Holy Ghost.

Such, to give this Epistle an historical application, may be esteemed the original nucleus of one of the Churches addressed in the Revelation. Here Paul again exercised his ministry for three years, and ceased not to "warn every one night and day with tears."

And great, indeed, was the result of the Apostle's labour;—"Many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them, also, which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men." Acts xix. 18, 19. This is quite in keeping with the known character of Ephesus; so noted was it for the practice of witchcraft and sorcery by its inhabitants, that the words used in incantations, were thence called '*Ephesian letters*.'

We next find an uproar in Ephesus, stirred up by those who dreaded the effect on their worldly interests, of the spread of the knowledge of the true God in that idolatrous city; after which, Paul took a solemn farewell of the disciples, and departed. He then went *into Macedonia*, as we read in the first verse of the twentieth chapter, leaving behind him, to prosecute the work so

auspiciously begun, Timothy, his “son in the faith.” This we gather from 1 Tim. i. 3. Paul says there, “I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went to Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.

Accordingly, the tradition is current, that Timothy was the first Bishop of the Church of Ephesus; and, such being the case, it is alleged, he might have been “the angel” referred to in this Epistle. Hence, also, I should add, it has been argued, that as there was *one* person in special responsibility in the Church at Ephesus,—as, indeed, in all those Churches in Asia—*Episcopacy* must have been the original Ecclesiastical order. To this conclusion, I of course except not; indeed, otherwise than on the supposition of its truth—not to go into more minute evidence on the point—I cannot conceive how the dogma of Papal supremacy could have been even agitated. Whereas, allowing that there were Bishops in the Primitive Church, it only recognizes the character of Romish corruptions, to suppose, that this fact yielded the pedestal, on which, in due time, the Papacy proceeded to erect her enormous pretensions. But whilst gladly admitting all the general instruction of this kind, which can be extracted from these Epistles, I, nevertheless, cannot concede that they

were given to us to be contemplated *historically*, and as relating to Churches constituted after the present Gentile pattern. Strict interpretation, I repeat, requires us to treat them *prophetically*, and in reference to Jewish gatherings.

To this I now address myself. And, first, a few general remarks. Entrenching myself within the irrefragable position already advanced, that all these Churches belong to “*the Lord’s day* ;” and reminding my reader of the manifestly *Jewish* phase which is given to them by the symbol, “seven candlesticks,” as though they were the elementary parts of ‘the seven branched candlestick’ in the Tabernacle, in progress towards reorganization :—I look out to discover, have we any information furnished to us elsewhere, touching the condition, in the latter days—not simply, of the *Jewish nation*, nor even of converts from them to *the present Church*, but—of an *election* distinct from both ; and of whom such Churches, as these in Asia, may be composed ? And I search not in vain. On turning to the twelfth chapter of this book, (the contents of which are not subsequent, but supplemental, I take, to the preceding visions) I read as follows, “There appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” ver. 1.

From Jacob's interpretation of Joseph's dream, (Gen. xxxvii.) in which he refers to himself and his family, the very symbols here adduced, we at once collect, that the Jewish people are the party represented by this woman. And, now, what is said of her? "She being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another great wonder in heaven, and, behold, a great red dragon;" (that this is the *Devil*, we find in a following verse; and, again, in the twentieth chapter.) "And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to his throne." ver. 2—5.

This, I conceive, is a summary rehearsal of what transpired (1) at *the birth* of Christ, when Herod, as the agent of Satan, "sought to slay the young child"—the rising star of the Jewish nation, their proclaimed King; and (2) at his *ascension*, when he was taken up into heaven; reserved there at the right hand of God, to fulfil, in due time, the import of the second Psalm.

The introduction here of such rehearsal of the past, seems designed as a laying bare of the old root of Satan's enmity against the Woman, (the Jewish people). Out of her, in spite of this Foe,

was at length produced the promised Deliverer, the bruiser of the serpent's head. Hence, in the latter day, the persecution and flight of the Woman into the wilderness, from the face of the dragon, which is the more precise subject of this part of the book. But just as the record of it is being commenced, (ver. 6) the Spirit breaks off to describe the immediately preliminary event,—so *exasperating* to the dragon—his ejection from the heavens, the prelude, as it were, to his eventual consignment to the bottomless pit and the lake of fire. Therefore, “because he knoweth that he hath but a short time,” he lets loose his utmost fury against that people, who, in the Divine plans, shall have had such a main part in his abasement.

And *now* the thread of the former vision is resumed, and the flight of the Woman into the wilderness is *circumstantially* related; mention being made of the Dragon's assault on her (ver. 13.); the supernatural assistance extended to her (ver. 14.); then the adoption, on Satan's part, of some more subtle mode of aggression, as indicated by his change of designation to “*Serpent;*”—“And the Serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood, after the Woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood” (ver. 15.); to meet which, next follows, the providential succour of “*the earth helping the Woman.*” (ver. 16.) Here-

upon, this expressive vision closes with Satan's addressing himself to the persecution of *another* party, not introduced on the stage before. "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed which keep the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ." (ver. 17.)

Now, who are these thus emphatically described? First, it is plain they are Jews, for they are "*of the Woman's seed.*" And yet, secondly, they are distinct from "the man child," she had previously brought forth, for they are called, "*the remnant of her seed.*"

Then, thirdly, besides keeping the commandments of God, they "*have the testimony of Jesus Christ,*" which is, as already shown, another expression for this book of "the REVELATION." For, in chap. i. 2, after using this expression, John puts in apposition with it, "*all things which he saw,*" i. e., the visions he afterwards rehearses. And, in ver. 9, he says to the same effect, that he was in the Isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and "*the testimony of Jesus Christ ;*" i. e., in order to receive this Revelation. See on ver. 9.*

* I shall only further add on this point, that no liberty is here taken with the original in thus explaining *δια την μαρτυριαν Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. The same force is given to the word "*δια*" in Heb. ii. 9, "Jesus was made for a little while," says the Apostle, "lower than the angels, *for* the suffering of death; i. e., *in order* to his suffering of death,—*δια το παθημα του θανατου*."

From all this, may we not gather, that we have here, the parties addressed in the seven Epistles; *Jewish believers, scattered throughout Asia*, God's chosen witnesses at that crisis, when the Gentile Church shall have corrupted her way on the earth; and after the gathering up of the elect, shall be undergoing the process of excision; that here we have them possessed of this blessed portion of the word; called to encounter the desperate assault of the Dragon, who "*makes war with them,*"—and, it appears, by the instrumentality of the Antichrist—the WILD BEAST, whose rise and progress immediately follows, in the next chapter. For "it was given him," we read, "to make war with the saints, and to overcome them." ch. xiii. 7.

But enough of general remarks. To begin now with the inscription of this Epistle before us. It is addressed to the presiding *Angel*, some one, doubtless, as already observed, officiating as the *Sheliach Zibbor* was wont to do in the Jewish synagogue.

Ver. 1. *Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*] Attention has been already called to the *distribution* over the addresses to the seven Churches, of the portraiture of the Lord Jesus, which John saw,—shewing

that, in the contemplation of His glorious Person, there are resources treasured up for all the possible exigencies of His people. The features of his Person here selected for presentation are these, “*holding the seven stars in his right hand, and walking in the midst of the candlesticks.*”

This description imports the sustaining power, and unceasing vigilance of the Lord, as regards the *Church—Minister, and people*. For, the “stars,” we read in the first chapter, are “the angels of the seven Churches.” The symbol is significant of the light and knowledge which these dignitaries receive from their great Head, to communicate to their brethren under them. And to show their relationship to Christ as their upholder, He represents himself as “*holding them in his right hand.*” Holding strongly, or ‘*grasping,*’ would better convey the force of the original. Thus, it is taught, Christ assigns his Ministers their respective places, in which to shine as “stars;” and therein maintains them. This may be applied to all Christians, but it has a peculiar emphasis in relation to Ministers; and they are held, as we see here, in His *right hand—the working hand, the hand of strength.*

Again:—He “*walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks ;*” that is, exercises constant inspection over these assemblies of saints; albeit He is the *unseen centre* of all their

union. The scene contrasts with what *will* obtain, when this inchoate symbol of seven distinct candlesticks shall have ripened into the destined unity of the *one seven branched candlestick*, i. e., the Jewish nation, organized in their land, with Messiah visibly reigning over them—the reflectors of the knowledge of God throughout the earth.

We now come to the matter of this Epistle. It begins with *commendation*; and this is the general characteristic of all the Epistles.

Ver. 2. *I know thy works.*] This clause, indeed, does not necessarily imply commendation, but simply denotes the omniscience of Christ. The Lord, however, in the same breath adds,—

And thy labour and thy patience.] The word “labour” is a very forcible one in the original, and might be better rendered *toil*. To form an idea of what this may be, we may refer to the past, even Paul’s labours, under circumstances not so eventful. He thus depicts the endurance which fell to his lot. “Are they ministers of Christ?” (referring to those who sought to magnify themselves, to the Apostle’s disparagement, as ministers amongst the Corinthians) “I speak as a fool, I am more; in labours more abundant; in stripes above measure; in prisons more frequent; in deaths oft; . . . Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches. Who is weak,

and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" 2 Cor. xi. 23—29. Of such pains-taking zeal and suffering as this, we may imagine the great Head of the Church to take cognizance, in the case of this Church of Ephesus, and its presiding Angel.

But even this standard we must judge to be below the reality, when we look to "*the day of the Lord*" as the period of this Church's career; when the *Beast*, the very embodiment of Satan, will be waging his exterminating warfare against the saints. And, is it not in the meek, yet enduring conflict, which the Ephesian Church will have with this dreadful foe, that the toil and patience here noticed will shew itself? See the emphatic note, to this effect, which is sounded in the thirteenth chapter. The dark exploits of the Beast are thus recited:—"And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and them that dwell (literally *tabernacle*) in heaven;"—i. e., I submit, the Church of this dispensation, now hid in the cloudy pavilion with their Lord,—“And it was given him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was give him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not writtten in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” ver. 6—8. Hereupon

the significant utterance comes forth;—"If any man have an ear, let him hear." (ver. 9.) And it is followed by the announcement—"He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword;" (an awful crisis this in which as I take it, captivity and the sword will be inevitable, according to the caprice of the persecutor.)

And now comes the moral bearing of all this upon the confessors of that day. "*Here is the patience and the faith of the saints*, ver. 10; and still more definitely—the description harmonizing with "the remnant of the Woman's seed," identified as composing the seven Churches—" *Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*" ch. xiv. 12.

Nor is it to be overlooked, that, as there are here two connexions wherein the patience of the saints is, as it were, celebrated; so in the commendation of the Church of Ephesus, there is a double mention made of this grace;—for example, "I know. . . .thy labour, (or toil) *and thy patience*," ver. 2; and again, "and hast borne and *hast patience*," ver. 3. And, perhaps this repetition is designed to take in the sufferings that will have to be sustained from the two different quarters,—the Beast and Babylon.

The next thing we come to in this Epistle may

appear, at first sight, incompatible with this patience,—

How thou canst not bear them which are evil]—but there is no contradiction in this. These sufferers may be meek and patient under personal inflictions, and yet be impatient, intolerant of the sin and dishonour then being perpetrated against God. Our Lord himself, we read, was affected with anger, as well as grieved at the Jews' hardness of heart, (Mark iii. 5.); and just because his holiness was as perfect as his love. And in proportion as these qualities combine in His people, there will be the experience and manifestation of similar emotions.

And thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles and are not, and hast found them liars.] Such is the form of evil of which this Church is intolerant. And, it appears, it will abound in the latter-day—parties putting forth pretensions to Apostleship, without any warrant for it; false prophets, as they are called by Peter and Jude, emissaries of the Evil One. For trying such, and unmasking them, the Angel here gets credit. There will not be a taking for granted that all is right, if only an orderly succession from others—veritable Apostles, be found attaching to them. But they will be “*tried*,” doubtless, by the Word of God, and the testimony which they give to Jesus as having

come in the flesh, and now about to come again in glory. 1 John, iv. 1—3, 2 John, ver. 7.

And, surely—to gather from this a lesson of instruction to ourselves, what is approved of in the conduct of this Church, cannot be wrong for us to pursue, under similar circumstances. Let me, then, carefully impress on the reader the important truth, that professed Teachers in the Church now, should not have their pretensions yielded to, as a matter of course, but should be tested by the standard of God's word. Nor to this end, is it their *life* only, that should undergo examination, but also their *doctrine*. When our blessed Lord said of false Teachers, "By their fruits ye shall know them," He referred, not principally, if at all, to their walk, but to the *doctrine* they taught; for this was their specific fruit as TEACHERS. And of such, it is manifest, the life alone is not an adequate criterion whereby to judge. Arius was considered a devout man, in his day; Socinus, also, it is said was irreproachable in his morals; and others might be adduced, like these, most pestilent Teachers, who have perverted many souls, and yet so far as their outward walk went, fault might not be found with them. What they *teach*, therefore, I repeat, is that which should be chiefly looked to, in Teachers; and no succession of office, or even piety of deportment, should compensate in our eyes for divergence from the standard of Apos-

tological truth. As Paul says “If any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” Gal i. 9. Thus it is, we can conceive, that these alleged Apostles, in “the day of the Lord,” shall be tried, and the Church of Ephesus is commended for trying them. The fact is, however men may talk of being successors of the Apostles, true Apostolical succession lies not in the flesh, but in the possession of the same Holy Spirit of God, which the Apostles had. And if we have not this endowment, if we are not led and animated by the Spirit, as *really* as they were, and testify not to the same truths, we have not the *true* succession from them. This is a point of which sight should not be lost.

Ver. 3. “*And for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*”] The Head of the Church thus continues his strain of commendation. This shews us that the work of this Angel and his brethren is not a mechanical thing; but the fruit of love to Christ. And here let the child of God be very jealous over himself. For it is very possible to go through a daily routine of religious occupation, and yet be only animated by a sort of galvanic life, generated by the circumstances around us. In which case, the event will naturally be, the settling down into selfish indolence; for all artificial motions must sooner or later come to

an end. That which suggests the persuasion of “better things, and things which accompany salvation,” is, as the Apostle writes, the work and labour of *love*, shewed towards *the name of Christ*. Heb. vi. 10 Where love is the moving principle of activity, there will be perseverance; and the reason why many have run well for a while, but at last have fallen back to the world, is, that they possessed not this principle of vitality.

Ver. 4. *Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*] Thus, at length, comes censure. It is not to be doubted but that the name of the Lord, his Person, is still dear to this Church. But they have declined in their intensity of affection. And of this He takes notice. What close discernment does this indicate? as though He who “walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,” watches the slightest flickering of the lamps.

But, now, to see that in strictness of interpretation, this belongs to Jewish believers “in the Lord’s day,” or the day of the Lord, let us turn to the book of Exodus, the nineteenth chapter. “And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle’s wings, and brought you unto myself.” (ver. 4.)

The people of Israel now gathered round Mount Sinai, are here reminded of how God had interposed in their behalf, when he opened a passage for them through the Red Sea, and then engulfed their enemies in the returning tide. Indeed, they had themselves celebrated this marvellous act of redemption in that song of praise, recorded in ch. xv. And truly, that was the time of their "*first love*," the time of their espousals. Accordingly, it is alluded to as such in the second chapter of Jeremiah:—"Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." (ver. 1, 2.) Thus, the first love of Israel is identified by God, with their going after Him in the wilderness—an event which followed their experience of his mighty hand and outstretched arm at the Red Sea, and was accompanied by daily mementos of his care—the bread from heaven, and the water from the rock. But, alas! from the ardour of their love they soon declined, as their subsequent history too plainly testifies. Such is the record of Israel's case of old.

Now let us remember, that in the prophetic vision of the same people, already referred to in the twelfth chapter of this book, they are represented

under the emblem of the woman who brought forth the man child, as fleeing into the wilderness, where they have an asylum prepared of God for them, from the malice of the Dragon. In fact, we cannot doubt but that we have here the antitypical rehearsal of Israel's former experience, recorded in Exodus. The parallelism of description at once suggests the thought—"I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself"—we read in Exodus. And here it is written,—“to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might flee into the wilderness into her place.” The place of safety, in both cases, being “*the wilderness* ;” and, then, the supernatural succour indicated by the same expression, “*eagle's wings*,” is alike remarkable.

Of course, then, as a part of the nation, the remnant of the woman's seed, “who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ,” ch. i. 17—and whom we have identified with the seven Churches, will have partaken of the Divine care and preservation extended to the whole body. And so, under such circumstances as these, the Church in Ephesus being gathered to the faith of Christ, will doubtless, at this season, evince all the warmth of first love. But, the issue is here disclosed—their love will “wax cold ;” perhaps, through the “*abounding of iniquity*,” of which

we read in the Gospels. Mat. xxiv. 12. Thus far, we can discern unequivocal marks of the future in this Epistle.

We now come to the *tenderness* with which our Lord utters his reproach to this offending Church; and surely the same should go to our hearts, and touch us to the quick, if our consciences charge us with similar declension. Having begun with commendation, and lingered on it as His grateful theme, Jesus at length adds, "*nevertheless I have somewhat against thee.*" It reminds us of the reproof to Simon (Luke vii.), "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee." He speaks first of Simon's hospitality, and then of the deficiencies in it, which had been supplied by the poor penitent woman, whom he so much despised:—"thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." The same gentle style of reproof is adopted here.

This should be an example to those who are in authority; yea to every child of God, who would discharge the duty of brotherly admonition when laid upon him—first to commend whatever is commendable, before coming to that which needs censure. This is the effectual, yet tender way of reaching the offender's heart; just as the surgeon

sometimes acts, when he conceals the lancet in his sponge, and whilst anointing the wound, at the same time probes it.

Ver. 5. *Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.*] This exhortation shows the intense longing there is on the part of the Lord, that the backsliding He has just noticed, should be healed. And, it is observable, that what is urged in order to this, is that the first *works* should be renewed, not simply that the first *love* should be felt; as though love, without the practical manifestation of it, would be but dissimulation in the eyes of Him, with whom we have to do.

Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.] If the enjoined repentance ensue not, here is the threatening used—"I will come," literally "*I am coming unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place.*" We are not told what the issue of this solemn warning will be touching the future; but, making application of it to the past; as it seems the ancient Church of Ephesus has altogether disappeared in the East, we may conclude that the warning was not attended to by them—that repentance did not take place.

How solemnly, then, does this speak to us as a Church, as well as individuals! There is now

much activity of a religious character in our land. Church extension, and organization of schools, and other bustling enterprises of benevolence, are being carried on to a great extent. But, amidst it all, it is quite plain that there is a lamentable declension in love to God, a failing in sympathising zeal for *His Glory*. The civilization and softening of men, the improvement of society, so as to render it more conducive to our own comfort; in fact, *self-seeking*, not the impulse of holy self-denying love, more or less characterizes the religious activity which prevails. And, what will be the consequence, if this heavenly principle reassert not its ascendancy? Why, the Lord is coming and will remove *our* candlestick also out of its place. This can be done, let us remember, quite consistently with the preservation of the “elect,”—the remnant that are faithful amidst the evil; for they may be withdrawn to meet their coming Lord in the air. Indeed, this *is* their blessed hope; and the necessary consequence to the visible body of Christendom left behind—the mere husk and shell of Christianity—will be, that it will openly apostatize and become absorbed into the ranks of Antichrist, and so darkness cover this land, once radiant with Gospel light and privileges!

This reflection shows the importance of our taking heed to the sins of the Nation, in which God has cast our lot; more especially, as in our

case, the Church is but another aspect of the nation,—our Queen, and the other estates of the realm, professing themselves to be Christians, and so coming under the responsibility of such. And, since our declension from God has been *national*, so, it is obvious, must be our repentance, if judgment is to be averted.

Ver. 6. *This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.*] Here is a return to commendation, as if the Lord lingered upon this more pleasing strain. These Nicolaitanes, it is supposed, were somewhat like the Socialists of the present day. But it is admitted, that to all historical notices of them, great obscurity attaches. In Neander's Church history, the digest of these notices is introduced, with this remarkable proviso,—“*if, indeed, the actual existence of such a sect can be proved.*” * And corresponding with this doubtfulness of speech, is the judgment which seems collected by the students of Patristic theology generally, namely—that the early fathers applied the epithet, “Nicolaitanes,” to the gnostic heretics of their day, as the Divinely appointed stigma for licentious livers, which they found to their hand in the Apocalypse, without deriving it from any leader, such as Nicolas the Deacon; indeed, it is said they acquit him of the imputation. It is to

* Vol. ii. page 158.

the future, accordingly, that, I believe, this, as well as the rest of the Epistle relates. And the etymology of the term "*Nicolaitanes*" is not a little significant of the characteristics of latter-day evil;—'the people conquerors,' it might be rendered; and, already, be it remembered, we hear of 'the majesty of the people'—'the invincibility of the power of the people,' &c.; symptomatic of those "great swelling words," to which the Epistles of Jude and Peter contain so many references. The hatred, then, of the deeds of such, by the Church of Ephesus, is a token of spiritual health amidst their declension, which our Lord notices with complacency. After all, it evinces that there is somewhat of like-mindedness with Himself—the essence of true friendship, which consists in having similarity of feelings, 'willing and nilling,' as it is said, 'the same things.'

Ver. 7. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*] In this oracular utterance, we have, as it were, the advertisement, that what has been said belongs not to the seven Churches merely, but to every Christian. In this and the two following Epistles it comes after the *preceptive* matter; in the other Epistles it comes after the *promissory*. As though the design of the Lord Jesus is to arrest universal attention, not to one subject apart from the other, but to both together.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.] Such is the precise promise of this Epistle. To see its import, we must weigh accurately the allusions it contains.

First of all, then, let us consider the term "*paradise*," It is used in two other places only. First, we find it in 2 Cor. xii., where Paul speaks of his visions: "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ, such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, How that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Observe, Paul here says he was caught up to "*the third Heaven*." We may suppose this to be some special place where God's glory is manifested. But, he further speaks of being caught up into *Paradise*, whereby is denoted, according to many, the place of departed happy spirits. And this would seem to derive weight from a comparison with the other place where the word occurs, namely—in our Lord's address to the thief on the cross, "Verily I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Luke xxiii. 43. This certainly appears to confirm the interpretation in question. But, if so, how are we to understand this text, in the Revelation, which speaks of "the tree of life" being *in the*

midst of Paradise? For, all the promises addressed to the Churches run up to the time of the Lord's coming, cotemporaneous with resurrection, when the *mere happiness* of the intermediate state is crowned with *glory*. Shall we, then, assign to the same term, two different meanings? This, I conceive, would not be dealing fairly with the word of God. On the other hand, suppose we take the term as uniformly meaning the place of future glory, how are we to understand our Lord's promise to the dying thief, which seems to identify "Paradise" with the blessedness then at once about to open on him? Perhaps the difficulty is best obviated by thus altering the stopping of the passage—"Verily I say unto thee to-day, thou shalt be with me in paradise." The thief asked for a *future* remembrance by Christ. But Christ assures him of more than this—even his *present* consideration: "I say unto thee *to day*, thou shalt be with me in paradise."

As to the passage in Corinthians, it is just as easy to conceive that St. Paul was transported into the place of glory, as into that of departed spirits; and taking the term in this sense, i. e., to signify the place of future glory of the risen saints, all that we read of the concomitants of that glory, happily accords with such view. Turn, for example, to Rev. xxii., "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life,

clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. *In the midst* of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there *the tree of life.*” This at once identifies the locality in question with “Paradise;” for, in the midst of *it* also, is said to be “the tree of life:” so runs the promise to the Church of Ephesus. But, to define it further, it is called a “*city.*” For, look to the previous chapter, verses 23, 24: “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.” In this city, “in the midst of the street of it,” is the tree of life.

But again: what is the city? Let us look to the tenth verse of this twenty-first chapter, and we shall see that it is “the new Jerusalem,” whose builder and maker is God. It will be connected, doubtless, with the earthly Jerusalem; and will answer to the holiest of all, in the tabernacle and in the temple, of which it will be the antitype. For, let us bear in mind, that the tabernacle and the temple were “*patterns of things in the heavens,*” made after models shown to Moses and David. The place, therefore, called Paradise—“*the Paradise of God*”—is that new Jerusalem. There

was a Paradise *of man*. The word rendered “*garden*,” in Gen. ii. 8, where our first parents were put, is translated *Paradise* in the Septuagint version. It was defiled by sin, and has passed away. But “*the Paradise of God*,” the new Jerusalem, is that glorious inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, “which fadeth *not* away.” 1 Pet. i. 4.

Of the other expression, “*the tree of life*” in the midst of it, I now come to treat. In order to understand its import, we must turn to Gen. ii. 9: “out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; *the tree of life also in the midst of the garden.*” Now, there was another tree thus situated: “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” See ch. iii. 3. And it is remarkable, that not until man fell, by eating of the latter, did God take measures for preventing a trespass on the former. As though intimating, that *only then* was it exposed to man’s inordinate desire—that, as long as “the tree of knowledge” was held sacred, so would it be with “the tree of life.”

Thus related to each other, what did these trees represent? Their very names, I submit, point to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose character is thus celebrated by the Psalmist; “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness:” (Psalm xlv. 7)—this answering to “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” Whilst, touching the other, “the

tree of life," He is said to be "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." 1 John i. 2. And, considering the Lord Jesus as the great antitype of these trees, we may gather, that the sin of our first parents lay in this, that they attempted to get at that knowledge which is "eternal life," by their own enterprise, and setting at nought God's ordinance for it, even the great COMING ONE shadowed forth in these symbols—after whose image they were created.

But now to return to our precise subject; it may be asked, if we take the Lord Jesus Christ to be the antitype of "the tree of life," why should not his Personal presence in the future glory supersede the introduction into the promise of "the tree of life?" The substance being extant, should not the shadow vanish away? It does not follow, however, that because the antitype has come, the type must cease to exist. For example, we know there will be sacrifices hereafter in the millennial dispensation, although Christ, the true sacrifice, shall have been long since offered. Nor is this point to be disputed by any who reverence the word of God; for, in the prophet Ezekiel, (ch. xliii.—xlvi.) is furnished the exact ritual which is to be observed in the oblation of such sacrifices in the future temple at Jerusalem.

Moreover : be it observed, there is *one* manifest end, which will be answered by these sacrifices—they will commemorate the humiliation of Messiah, and keep up the remembrance of his having been “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” And, although the Jewish nation may not need the elementary teaching of animal sacrifices, the contrary may be the case with the Gentile nations, whose dispensation of blessing will then have arrived; and who, coming up to Jerusalem, will be instructed by the Jews—“the Priests of the LORD,” as they shall be called; and “the Ministers of our God”—using these sacrifices, as we can conceive, to demonstrate their subject. Isaiah xli. 6. This, accordingly, may help us to understand how the *literal* tree of life may consist hereafter with the Revelation of the Person and glory of the great Antitype—the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, besides being a visible, it will be a *sensibly-felt*—a sort of sacramental memento of the vital relation in which the Lord Jesus, the open fountain of all life, will ever stand to his saints. Hence, we read here, of their “*eating* of the tree of life.” And, that the glorified saints shall partake of food hereafter, has in it nothing that should offend any reflecting mind. Constituted as human nature is, we know that sweet odours, beautiful sights, melodious sounds, minister to its

sinless enjoyment; and it is not contended that there will not be *these* elements of gratification hereafter. Why then exclude from the category the like innocent pleasure of *eating*?

It may also be observed, concerning this tree, from Rev. xxii. 2, that there is to be a variety of its fruit yielded every month; and that “the leaves of the tree” will be “*for the healing of the nations*”—perhaps, the nations smitten by the plagues which shall have been poured on the earth during the Antichristian reign. These leaves will doubtless be dispensed by the glorified saints. They will have, as it were, the repository to go to, whence they will minister to the nations. With this interpretation, it may occur to the reader as inconsistent, that the promise to the *nations*, is, that they shall have access to the tree itself; for we read at the fourteenth verse, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, *that they may have right to the tree of life.*” But, although this is certainly an allusion to the obedient among the nations, yet, it is not said, they are to *eat* of the tree of life, i.e., the fruit of it. Their participation of it, therefore, may relate only to its leaves, which are for their healing. And though, from Ezek. xlvii. 7, 12, it would appear, that a uniformity will obtain in the arrangements of the earthly Jerusalem, after the manner of the heavenly,—trees being mentioned

in the description of both, and with like properties—yet, this is not incompatible with a subordination of the one to the other, signified also by the fact, that the trees, in Ezekiel's vision, are not said to be trees "of life." Perhaps, to the Jews—the next link in the ordained chain of blessing, after the Church—will be committed the ministration of a minor beneficence to the Gentiles. And this feature of the future, Ezekiel's vision may be intended to denote.

This preserves the distinction between the glorified saints, and the saved nations: the saints will *eat* of the tree of life; the nations will have the *leaves* ministered to them, by the saints. Thus, combining the allusions in the Revelation, we have a two-fold aspect of the future glory of the Church; themselves partakers from The Spring of all blessing, both *sacramentally* and *really*; and conductors of its streams to the creatures of God under them. There are other aspects in which we shall have to view this glory, but this is the first in which it is presented to us, in connexion with "the tree of life." Nor let us overlook it; for, however imperfect may be our comprehension of its full import, whatever God promises, should be prized and investigated. Having respect to all his *promises*, is a mark of sincerity, equally with having respect to all his commandments. Psalm cxix. 6.

Another point, common to all these Epistles, remains to be noticed,—the *individual* direction of the promise, “TO HIM that overcometh.” To appreciate this, we must consider that the prevailing character of the collective body might be (what it is, indeed, implied to be here) degeneracy—a declining from their first love. Hence, we can imagine that were the promise announced only *corporately*, faithful individuals would be discouraged. But being *personal*,—“to HIM that overcometh”—every one is reminded, that, however solitary he may be,—“among the faithless, faithful only he”—still, he shall not be lost sight of in the crowd. The great Head of the Church, who represents himself as “walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,” knows how to discriminate.

This *individual** recognition of the faithful is similarly used, by way of encouragement, in 2 Tim. ii. 16: “Shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness: And their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus, who, concerning the truth, have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already.” It is evident, from this, that great evil had crept into the Church in the Apostle’s day. But, what says the next verse? “Nevertheless, the foundation of the Lord

* See John x. 14, 27.

standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house," that is, the visible Church, "there are not only vessels of gold and of silver,"—genuine believers—"but also of wood and of earth,"—false professors—"and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour," &c. Thus Timothy was not to relax in his correction of evil, and separation of himself from it, although he was surrounded by the degenerate and perverse. Whatever the issue, his labour should not be in vain in the Lord. And this should be no little encouragement to the children of God, whenever at any period the Church to which they belong is characterized by coldness and declension. They should remember, that the promise is addressed *to each individual*—"to *him* that overcometh."

Again: another remark occurs here. The word "overcometh" is one that plainly involves the idea of outward conflict and suffering. But, although from this consideration, and that of their lot being cast in "*the day of the Lord*," such must be presumed to be more or less the experience of all the Churches; yet, the weak point in the Church of Ephesus—to which, therefore, the remnant must stand especially

opposed—consists, as we have seen, not so much in their exposure to violence from without, as in the influence of decay from within. Hence, we may gather, by way of application to ourselves, that witnessing for God, at any degenerate period of the Church—even in times of outward tranquillity—is reckoned by Him amongst the Christian's victories, and will be rewarded accordingly. And so, the preferments of the glorious kingdom of Christ, are open to the present generation of believers, if steadfast on the Lord's side. For, alas ! is it not our case, that whilst there is now prevalent much high profession of religion, there is little *life* among us ; the best portion of the Church—even the evangelical—being sadly degenerate. Surely, in these circumstances, the children of God should be not a little comforted by this individual form of promise ; “ to him that overcometh,” &c. Be it so, reader, that you are cast out, for your faithfulness and singularity—that you are taxed with being censorious and high-minded ; the Lord Jesus Christ will even now find you, as he did of old the poor blind man. (John ix.) And, by-and-bye, he will appear to your joy ; and your traducers shall be ashamed. Isaiah lxvi. 5.

In fine, what should be the practical effect upon us of the contemplation of this whole Epistle ? May we not say : *this*, at all events—the realizing that Christ is in the midst of us,

observing us ; and, therefore, that we should walk as children of light. If the visitation of a human superior be expected, what preparations are made for it. How, then, should we deport ourselves in reference to Him, who is always amongst us, and whose eyes are “like a flame of fire,” denoting his searching, penetrating glance ! To this precise effect, we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear : For OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE.” Heb. xii. 28, 29. Surely, this recollection impressed upon the child of God, should make him ever earnest and serious. True, God is his loving Father, but He is also a jealous, righteous Judge. Therefore we read again, “And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, *pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*” 1 Pet. i. 17.

Jan. 12, 1857

CHAPTER II.

SECTION SECOND.

Verses 8—11.

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna, write ; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive ;

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer : behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried ; and ye shall have tribulation ten days : be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches ; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Ver. 8. *And unto the angel of the Church in Smyrna, write ; These things saith the first and the last.*] The attention of the reader has already been called to the fact, that the style which our Lord assumes, in addressing the seven Churches, is exactly suited to the circumstances of each Church. For example, in the Church of Ephesus, there is noticed a departure from their first love ; accordingly, the Great Head of the Church presents himself in this connexion, as “ He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks ; ” as though he would press upon the attention of that Church, that he is continually observing them, so as to discern the most incipient declension of affection. In like manner, in the case of the Church of Smyrna, the style the Lord assumes, is just suited to *its* circumstances. That Church is depicted as exposed to the violence and oppression of cruel enemies. Persecution is hanging over it. Therefore, the description the Lord appropriates to himself, in

addressing it, is, “*The first and the last, which was dead and is alive.*” These titles—“the first and the last”—are not titles of absolute Deity, but of THE CHRIST, i. e., God the Son, having come into the limitations of creaturehood, in order to the revelation of God. Even in this character, all creation is posterior to him. He was set up before all things, from everlasting. Thus he is “*the first*”: and still, in the same relation of THE CHRIST, he is “*the last*,” because all things will be summed up, and find their culminating point in Him. He is, at once, the foundation from which creation springs; and the apex, into which it rises. And all power, all wisdom, all knowledge, all goodness,—every quality we can suppose to characterize the mighty column of creation, when perfected, will have been, from the beginning, conceived in Him. *This*, He will have the Church of Smyrna to contemplate. And why? Because they are subject to tribulation; and He would animate them, by the recollection, that, with Him, whose irresistible might bears up the pillars of the world, they have to do, as their abiding Benefactor.

Which was dead and is alive.] This, also, answers to the exposure to persecution, which is the lot of this Church. And they are here taught, that, even should matters come to the worst, and they were put to death, this was only what their

Great Head had endured. He had died ; and dying like Him,—like Him they would be raised from the dead. This is a comforting consideration for them. In this aspect we find the Lord Jesus Christ presented to the Church, in other places, to support them under the prospect of suffering. Take the instance of Paul's address to Timothy, 2 Tim. ii., "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. . . . Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." ver. 1, 3. Thus, he brings before Timothy the example of a soldier. Then, he adduces the example of one striving in the games : "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully." ver. 5. Again, the case of the husbandman is appealed to ; (see the marginal reading) "The husbandman labouring first, must be partaker of the fruits." ver. 6. At length he comes to the climax of his exhortation ; "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, *was raised from the dead, according to my gospel.*" ver. 7, 8. Now, what is the connection here ? Obviously, it is to this effect, that if Timothy had to lay down his life as a faithful witness for the truth, his Lord had done so too, who was yet raised from the dead,—the very consideration which is pressed upon the Church

of Smyrna. “These things saith the first and the last, *which was dead and is alive.*”

But there is another aspect under which we may view these words. When affliction or trial comes upon us, our consciences are likely to be exercised, and reviving the sense of sin—to render us uneasy. Well, how are they to be quieted? By the reflection that Jesus “bare our sins in his own body” on the cross,—that he *died*, and, also, *rose* again. So that the moment the child of God contemplates the resurrection of Christ, there is balm for his troubled spirit. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Rom. viii. 34.

Thus, the designation of our Lord, in this Epistle, is designed to comfort the Church of Smyrna, under the painful circumstances in which they are contemplated; just as the same words were used, we saw, to comfort John, when, overcome with terror at his vision of Christ, he fell down at His feet as dead.—“He laid His right hand upon me,” writes John, “saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last, I am He that liveth and was dead.” Rev. i. 17, 18. With such a coincident application of these words, we can hardly be mistaken in the interpretation of them now given. The Church of Smyrna will be

threatened with trials likely to engender fear, and the Lord comforts them, by placing before them the fact of His being “the first and the last, which was dead and is alive.”

Ver. 9. *I know thy works.*] This beginning is common to all these Epistles ; and, of the whole period to which they relate—“*the Lord’s day,*” it would seem that judgment according to *works* will be one special characteristic.

And thy tribulation, and poverty, but thou art rich.] Such is the detail of their circumstances. They are afflicted and poor, yet rich ; i. e., with regard to this world, they are poor ; but with regard to the world to come, they are *rich* ; they have treasure laid up for them in heaven,—even a better inheritance than earth affords. Now turn to the Epistle of James ; and observe, in the first place, its *inscription*, “James a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the *twelve tribes which are scattered abroad*, greeting.” This has embarrassed all our commentators, in their historical application of the Epistle to the past ; for, at our Lord’s first advent, with *individual* exceptions, only the two tribes were settled in the land ; nor, after *their* dispersion, do we read of any union being effected between them and the ten tribes that had been carried into captivity. But see how well this inscription comports with the circumstances of the *future*—even the day of the Lord, in which

will be extant these seven Churches, composed of Jews, as we have seen, who “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ?”

Referring, moreover, to the *contents* of the Epistle of James, what an exact counterpart is therein furnished to the allusions here, in the case of the Church of Smyrna? Look, for example, to the second chapter, “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your assembly, a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man, in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool.” ver. 1—3. (Let us observe, as we pass on, that the assembly and its arrangements, which are thus pointed at, strikingly answer to what belonged to the synagogue of old, in regard to which, we read of the “Pharisees loving the uppermost seats, (Luke xi. 43); indeed, as already stated, page 47, the word translated “assembly,” is, literally, *synagogue*.) The Apostle, then, speaking to the case of a poor brother being told to sit in a low seat, says, “Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts.” ver. 4. And, comforting the despised remnant, he adds,

“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” ver. 5. Now, is not this very like the address we have in the Epistle to the Church of Smyrna, “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich.)”?

Again, another feature of the future, in conformity with this experience of poverty by the Church of Smyrna, is the fact, that then, in the day of the Lord; the Antichrist will be in the ascendant; amongst whose other acts of enormity will be included the interdict of buying and selling, except by those who receive his mark. “And he caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Rev. xiii. 16. Of course, as a consequence of this tyrannical and blasphemous measure, *poverty* will more or less accrue to the faithful servant of God.

And I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.] Blasphemy means evil speaking of any kind; and these saints will be subject to this, like their blessed Master before them. And no small aggravation will it add to their other sufferings. That reproach may “*break the heart,*”

we learn from one of the utterances of our blessed Lord, "in the days of his flesh."* Moreover, they are said to experience this from *Jews*, that is, I submit, literal Jews; not, indeed, following the faith of their father Abraham, and, therefore, not genuine Jews, so to speak; for, no one is a genuine Jew who believes not in Him of whom Moses and the prophets testified. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, . . . but he is a Jew which is one inwardly." Rom. ii. 28, 29. But still, these parties may not be denied to be *Jews*, i. e., Abraham's seed, *after the flesh*. Nor is our Lord's denomination of them, as "of the synagogue of Satan," inconsistent with this. That one may be a Jew by birth, and yet a child of the devil, He had witnessed in the days of His ministry—see John viii. : "As he spake these words many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him," (that is, the Jews indiscriminately, who had overheard him speaking; not the little believing company first noticed) "we be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of

* Romans xv. 3, with Psalm lxix. 9, 10, 19, 20.

sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever : but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed," (observe here, the Lord admits their natural relationship to Abraham) " but," he continues, " ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and ye do that which ye have seen with your Father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our Father. Jesus saith unto them, if ye were Abraham's children, (i. e., truly, in the right sense) ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God ; this did not Abraham *Ye are of your father the devil*, and the lusts of your father ye will do." ver. 30—44. Thus, we see what was the description of the Jews, in the time of our Lord—Jews literally ; but yet, children of the devil.

Now, similarly, in the Epistle to the Church of Smyrna, they are literal Jews who are spoken of—Jews in one sense ; but not Jews in the right sense. On the contrary, they were " of the synagogue of Satan:" and, it is a fact, that, of old, such nominal Jews were the greatest persecutors of the Church. We read, in the Acts of the Apostles, how the primitive Christians suffered at their hands. And again, we meet with the allusion in 1 Thes. ii. :

“For ye, brethren, became followers of the Churches of God, which, in Judea, are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even *as they have of the Jews*: who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us.” ver. 14, 15. The Apostle, here, plainly states that the uniform character of the unbelieving Jews was that of *persecutors*.

So far, accordingly, we can view this Epistle in the way of general application to the past. Indeed, Ecclesiastical history tells us, that, in the persecution of the Ancient Church of Smyrna, in which the Martyr Polycarp, the Bishop of that Church, was put to death, the Jews were the most clamorous and active abettors of Pagan cruelty. But, not to depart from our position, that its strict interpretation belongs to the future: let us remember that there will be blasphemy, in the most emphatic sense, in the coming days of Antichrist. Of this, we are informed in the same chapter to which we have already referred. “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemies: and power was given unto him, to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell (or, literally, ‘tabernacle,’) in heaven”—i. e., the saints, caught

up, and, with the Lord, at this time. The beast will blaspheme God, and he will blaspheme *them* also. Rev. xiii. 5, 6. But, shall there not be abettors of the Antichrist, at this time? and, included among them, false Jews, apostate Jews? Certainly, of the impiety that will mark such, in the latter day, we have a fearful account in the 28th chapter of Isaiah, verse 15—where, we learn, that, by virtue of their league with the Antichrist, they will consider they have made “*a covenant with death, and with hell are at agreement,*” so as to be entrenched against all disaster; but the impious designs of such, the Lord tells them, “*shall not stand.*” How natural, then, will it be for these apostate ones to imitate their Master, and to deal out blasphemy against their faithful brethren. Hence, it is probable, they are the very parties spoken of in this Epistle, amidst whose wicked revilings comes the word of consolation to the Church in Smyrna,—“*I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*” And, surely, this avowal that their gracious Lord is cognizant of their case, will be precious to them, in that evil hour; and, of itself, counteract the depressing tendency of their circumstances. Just, as it is no little enhancement of the consolation of the saints now, that Jesus appreciates whatsoever condition they are in, and is observant

of all they undergo. Nor ought we to forget this in our several exigencies. Who, in sickness, that consults a physician, but feels comforted, if he perceive that the physician understands his malady? for, then he prepares himself to rely the more on his sympathy and skill. So, in contemplating the Lord Jesus, the very fact of his knowing, as he does, every pressure that is upon us, yea, every idiosyncrasy of our constitution, and how trials affect us, administers sweet consolation: "The Lord knoweth the way that we take."

We next come to the Lord's exhortation to this Church.

Ver. 10. *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.*] Here is the Lord's exhortation to this Church, in the face of all the poverty, tribulation, and reproach, which they shall endure. But the meaning is obvious—we need not dwell upon it. Then follows an intimation of what the devil will devise against them:—

Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried.] To elucidate this, still referring it to the future, let us remember what has been already adverted to in chapter xii., namely, the Dragon's lying in wait to devour the man child; and then, upon the prey being snatched from him, going off "to make war with the remnant of the woman's

seed." And, in addition to the description of these latter in verse 17, accurately answering to that of the seven Churches, does not this future agency of Satan, on the earth, well comport with the emphatic allusion made to the same thing here? But the Great Head of the Church informs his faithful ones further,—

Ye shall have tribulation ten days.] This period of time, I believe, we are to take literally. There is no authority for interpreting "a day," in the Scriptures, to signify a year. This is one of the traditions current among Protestants; but it does not bear a moment's examination. The examples of "*Prophetic dialect*," as they are called, commonly adduced to support it, from Num. xiv. 34, and Ezek. iv 5, 6, serve not the purpose.

In the first case, the only words that can be denominated *prophetical*, are these—"your children shall wander in the wilderness *forty years*;" and we know Israel did wander in the wilderness for that exact period. The appointment, indeed, of such period for their probation, had a designed proportion to the number of the days in which the spies, with perverse minds, had been occupied in searching the land. But the forty days mean forty days, as truly as the forty years mean forty years. If it were said, 'your children shall wander in the wilderness forty days'—the *event* being that they

wandered forty years—then, the year-day theory would have a precedent. But there is no such statement; the simple record being, that God adjusted the punishment of Israel so as to give to it a retributive aspect—forty years experience of the wilderness, for forty days harbouring of unbelief.

In the other case, that of the prophet Ezekiel being instructed to lie upon his side so many days, because of the years of the iniquity of Israel and Judah:—the only *prophecy* here is of the duration of the threatened siege of Jerusalem; and unless it be maintained, that the prophet's recumbency for four hundred and thirty days, denotes four hundred and thirty years, during which the holy city has been or shall be continuously besieged!—this citation is equally irrelevant with the former. In fact, whatever of "prophetic dialect" there is in this passage, in respect to *time*, rather proves the truth that days mean days. And in the other passage there is no "prophetic dialect" at all, except what is found in the retributive form of words with which God pronounces judgment upon the sin of Israel. But this point will again come under discussion as we proceed.

Ten literal days, then, is the period during which violence rages against the Church of Smyrna. Nor is this duration of such trouble a trivial thing. Suppose the inhabitants of a city now, were to rise

against the Jews located among them, what fearful ravages might be committed even in ten days? But then, taking this period literally, it is a fact, that no mention of a precise ten days tribulation, affecting the ancient Church of Smyrna, is extant in history. That Church did indeed undergo tribulation, but not for such specific period. Thus we are shut up to the contemplation of this crisis, as literal and future,—that, to a tribulation of ten days, the Church of Smyrna will be subjected,—and that, against them, the devil will violently rage.

We now come to the animating exhortation and promise, with which the Epistle closes.

Ver. 10, 11. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches : he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*] This has its best explanation, in its recorded fulfilment, in Rev. xx.: “I saw thrones, and they sat upon them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus. . . .and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” ver. 4. Among this glorified throng, no doubt, the saints of Smyrna will have their portion. Observe, there were seen “*thrones*,” symbolizing kingly power; as the “*crown*” does, in the promise to the Church of Smyrna. And, in regard to the assurance which follows,—“*He*

that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death,”—we read what is tantamount to this, in the sixth verse, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” And, if we would know what the second death is, we have only to look at the fourteenth verse: “And death and hell,” or, *hades*,—i. e., I would say, the contents of both the grave and the receptacle of departed spirits—the souls and bodies of the wicked,—“were cast into the lake of fire. *This is the second death.*” Again, in the 21st chapter, we read—“The fearful and unbelieving . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Thus, the exhortation to the Church of Smyrna, which is directed against fear—fear of what man, or, even Satan, may do, is accompanied by the salutary suggestion of the real object of fear, even God himself. And this helps us to link on this Epistle to our Lord’s language, in the Gospel of Matthew, which manifestly refers to Jewish disciples, in the latter day, represented by those who are immediately addressed. Turn to the 10th chapter, and the 23rd verse: “But when they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you; *ye shall not have gone over the cities of*

Israel, till the Son of Man be come." This proves the futurity of our Lord's allusion, and that He is now speaking to the case of a Jewish remnant, occupied in witnessing for Him, amidst the nation, just prior to his coming in glory. To such disciples, then, what does our Lord say further? Look at the twenty-eighth verse; "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Is not this precisely parallel to what is implied in the address to the Church of Smyrna, encouraging them to be faithful, and fear not man or Satan, and so they should not be hurt of the second death?

But now, for a word of profitable application to ourselves, as we are admonished:—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches." It is remarkable, that the language in Matthew's gospel, which we have just identified with the purport of this Epistle, is recorded in another connexion, Luke xii. 5, where, in the same breath, our Lord admonishes his disciples—"Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy;" that is, affecting the praise of men, while professing to aim only at the approbation of God—a sin, to which the Pharisees were specially addicted. Luke xii. 1. And, is it not the case, that, although through the mercy of God, we, in this age, are exempt from

violent persecutions; yet, that we are subject, and the Church of God never more so, to the influence of this snare of human judgment,—what is called *public opinion*. It is, alas! with many, the vital element of their moral existence. Deprive them of popularity—the breath of incense from their fellow-men—and they pine away. But, let them inhale this, and they are restored. In fact, not only in the world, but in the professing church, there is a rage, such as was not in former times, for “*a name*” amongst men. And where this prevails around us, like a vitiated atmosphere; what need has every child of God of watchfulness against it. Surely, under such circumstances, the incentives to the martyr’s steadfastness, which this Epistle supplies, ought not to be regarded as of foreign or inflated application to us. To face the cannon’s mouth in battle, is often easier than to run the gauntlet of an injurious fame; and so, to many Christians, the risk of incurring the frown of a religious world, may be more oppressive than even a martyr’s pains.

And, in one direction, particularly, are we warned by our blessed Lord of the evil influence of such sensitiveness to human judgment:—“How can ye believe, which receive honour one from another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only, (John v. 44):—of which question the

plain implication is, that if we unduly care to obtain man's smile, or to escape his frown, we shall be incapacitated for the reception of Divine truth. The eye will not be "single" to discern the mind of God. May this reflection be deeply impressed upon the reader; in connexion, moreover, with this very portion of the word under consideration, whose plain literal interpretation is esteemed by most, so fraught with insuperable difficulty. Let us call to mind what Abraham's faith was, touching the Divine command! (Gen. xxii. 2.) It must have seemed to him, at first sight, even irreligious to lay his hand upon Isaac, the child of promise; but he "believed God;" and addressing himself to a literal obedience to His word, the result was, not that the promise was made void, but he explored another depth of the Divine wisdom and love, before unknown to him.

Let us tread in his steps, in regard to God's communications to us, and we shall realize the same blessed experience.

Jan. 12. 1857.

CHAPTER II.

SECTION THIRD.

Verses 12—17.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

Ver. 12. *And to the angel of the Church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.*] We saw, in contemplating the previous Epistles to the Churches of Ephesus and Smyrna, how the description of himself, which the Lord assumes in addressing them, is exactly suited to their circumstances. And thus here, to the peculiar condition of the Church of Pergamos, is similarly adapted His appropriation of the "sharp sword with two edges;" as though He had in view the danger they were in of being intimidated by enemies, and drawn aside by false teachers, to which circumstances of temptation the allusion is in the body of the Epistle.

Now, touching the precise period to which this relates, before going further, let us turn to the twenty fourth chapter of Matthew, bearing in mind the circumstances of the several Churches, which have thus far come before us. "All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you : and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." ver. 8—12. The reader will observe that this chapter contains the prophecy our Lord gave to his disciples upon the Mount of Olives, and, taking what is here quoted, for reasons already assigned,* as the description of the future condition of a faithful Jewish remnant, is it not very analogous to what we find attaching to these Churches, so far as we have explored the allusions to them? For example, in the Epistles already considered, does not our Lord speak of *love waxing cold*, of *false teachers abounding*, and of *great persecution*,—the very topics which occur in the passage from the twenty fourth of Matthew. And as to the correspondence of time, the reader will remember that the scene of these seven Churches is also laid

* See Apocalyptic Interpretation, page 67.

in the future ; John being “in spirit in *the Lord’s day*,” when he saw and heard the things he wrote.

The interpretation which thus refers the seven Churches, and the prophecy in Matthew, to the future, may be novel, but this should not be a hindrance to our embracing it, if, as already shown, God’s word lead the way to it.

Hereby is not prejudiced, I submit, the *application* of both these Scriptures to the present Church of God ; such may well coexist with the referral of their strict *interpretation* which is here contended for, to gatherings of Jewish saints in the latter days.

With this period, moreover, as elsewhere defined, as well as with the circumstances of the Church of Smyrna, already adverted to, accords the representation of our Lord as armed with *the sharp sword*. Look at the nineteenth chapter : “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse ; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And out of his mouth goeth *a sharp sword*, that with it he should smite the nations : and he shall rule them with a rod of iron.” ver. 11, 15. Here we have the sword mentioned again, in connexion with the Lord going forth in his career of vengeance, followed by his armies. But how, it may be asked, are we to understand this ? Are we to suppose that a

material sword will go forth out of the Lord's mouth? By no means. But when the time for the execution of the threatened vengeance arrives, let us remember the Jewish people will be on the stage, the appointed instrumentality, as of old, for smiting the wicked nations. And, accordingly, this righteous administration is celebrated by them in many of the prophetic Psalms; for example:—"Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a *two-edged sword in their hand*, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people." Psalm cxlix. 1, 2, 6, 7. Thus, though a literal sword will not proceed out of the Lord's mouth, yet will his *word* act as such, employing and directing the sword of Israel, whom he will use as His battle axe, and weapons of war, wherewith to "break in pieces the nations"—fighting against them, "as when he fought in the day of battle," in the times of Joshua. Jer. li. 20. Zech. xiv. 3.

With this, also, accords what we read of the destruction of the Man of Sin, in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians: "Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with *the spirit of his mouth*," ch. ii. 8, (or, "*the*

breath of his lips,” as we have it in Isaiah, ch. xi. 4.) For, this is manifestly a parallel account of the scene presented in Rev. xix. 21, where it is said, “the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth.” Combining the two passages, the meaning is plain, the breath or spirit of the Lord’s mouth will commission the sword which will do its work.

It is important to observe that the threatening of a sword is never used in Scripture, in connexion with the present dispensation, which is the time of grace ; but always with reference to that future day—the time of judgment, when the Lord shall be revealed from heaven, taking vengeance on those who obey him not. It is true He now chastens his people, but it is in love and mercy, not in anger ; whereas it is awakenings of anger only, which are represented by threatenings of *a sword*. Now to turn to the body of the Epistle :

Ver. 13. *I know thy works.*] This note of recognition is found in all the Epistles. See page 101.

And where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is.] Thus, the Lord knows where these saints have their place of sojourning, “even where Satan’s seat is.” This, of course, is unfavourable to them ; but the Lord is aware of it. He knows all the advantages his people enjoy ; but, we gather from this, he does not look at the bright

side only. He also looks at the dark side. The disadvantages under which they may have to labour; the temptations to which they are exposed—of all this, the Lord takes cognizance. But, it must be observed, there is much that is mysterious in this allusion—“*where Satan’s seat is.*” We have nothing answering to it in the Scriptural notices of the early Churches, given in the Acts of the Apostles, nor yet in the records of human history.

It is said, indeed, that Pergamos was a great city, and the treasure house of kings; and from these premises, commentators have argued, that, no doubt it was pre-eminently a wicked place, and therefore, equivalent to “*Satan’s seat!*” But the simple-minded child of God cannot be satisfied with this explanation; and so we may collect another indication of the future being the scene of this Epistle. Looking upon it, then, as prophetic, how may we understand its contents? Let us turn to Rev. xiii. 1: “And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.” Now, when is this vision seen? After the casting down of the Devil out of heaven, an event still to come; for, the Devil is in the heavens now, infesting them, as well as “walking up and down in the earth.” Many

believe this casting down of the Devil was accomplished even prior to man's creation; but it is not from their Bibles they have learned this. It is only a poetic fiction, rendered current by the genius of Milton. There is no authority for such notion in the Scriptures.* On the contrary, the Devil is therein uniformly represented as having power in the heavens, throughout this dispensation; so that we are told, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places," Eph. vi. 12, (marg. reading)—He is also called "the prince of the power of the air," Eph. ii. 2; and we read of his being ejected from this seat of influence, only prior to the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Hereupon, then, how does he act? For this is the point now before us. He proceeds to persecute the woman, the representative of the Jewish nation, and "the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ;" i. e., the constituents, as already submitted, of the

* Some readers will probably call to mind 2 Pet. ii. 4, and Jude 6, as at variance with this position. But it is obvious that these texts relate to a class of angels (distinct from the Devil and his angels) who had mingled themselves with the Antedeluvians, and simultaneously with them underwent judgment at the time of the deluge; the exception to the Divine vengeance in the case of both, being the preservation of Noah.

seven Churches—Jewish witnesses, whom the Lord will have standing up for him at that time. It is immediately in connexion with this, as though the instrumentality for effecting the Devil's object, that the vision is seen of this Beast rising out of the sea. In him the Devil will concentrate his power, and make a desperate effort to keep the world within his grasp. He offered our Lord, we know, all the kingdoms of the earth if He would worship him,—thus betraying it to be his design to procure some suitable agent, in whom he will vest an universal empire, and who, in return, will do him homage—being his ordinance for working out his purposes, even as Christ is that of the Father, for glorifying Him. In fact, then will be compassed the Devil's awful mimicry of the operations of the Triune Jehovah. As Christ received his commission and authority from the Father; so the beast will receive *his* from the Devil. And as Christ had the Holy Ghost glorifying Him; so we read of the beast having a false prophet, who will work miracles before him, and instigate men to worship him.

But, to proceed with what we read of this beast, “And the beast which I saw was like unto a *leopard*, and his feet were as the feet of a *bear*, and his mouth as the mouth of a *lion*: and the dragon gave him his power and his seat, and great authority.” ver. 2. With this, let us compare

a remarkable passage in Hosea, referring to the apostacy and chastisement of Israel, where God threatens to be to them like *this very variety of beasts*. “According to their pasture, so were they filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.” This was the sin charged upon them. “Therefore,” the Lord continues, “I will be unto them as a *lion*; as a *leopard* by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a *bear* that is bereaved of her whelps.” Hos. xiii. 6—8. So, then, as God raised up Pharaoh, that he might show forth his power in him; and then, again, Nebuchadnezzar, for the additional end of the punishment of Israel; so will He raise up the Antichrist of the last days, as the staff of his indignation; fulfilling, also, the oracular warning of Jesus, in the days of his flesh: “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another come in his own name, him ye will receive.” John v. 43.

But, to confine ourselves to one particular: in Rev. xiii. we read of the dragon giving the beast “*his seat*.” It is the very word used in the text; “even where Satan’s *seat* is.” In many places it is rendered “*throne*.” And, in consequence of the beast thus receiving his seat, he worships the dragon. Thus, putting these two passages together, we find that Pergamos is the place where the Antichrist will have his abode, i. e., where he will

probably begin his career ; for, revived Babylon, it appears, will become the great capital of his kingdom eventually. See Isa. xiv. 4. If we turn to Daniel, we shall find something, at least, to illustrate this celebrity which awaits the locality of Pergamos. “And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. So he came near where I stood : and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face ; but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man : for at the time of the end shall be the vision. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in *the last end of the indignation* : for at the time appointed the end shall be.” This note of the period of time, to which the following vision points, let the reader observe, that he may not be imposed on by any interpretation which refers it to past history. “The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia : and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences,

shall stand up :” (the Antichrist). “ And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power : and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people :” (the Jews). “ And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand ; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many : he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes ; but he shall be broken without hand. And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true : wherefore shut thou up the vision ; for it shall be for many days.” Dan. viii. 15—25. Hereupon Daniel faints as he contemplates these dreadful prospects.

Now, without assigning it as a fulfilment of this vision, but simply as an illustration from the past of what will be, it is a remarkable fact, that there was a king of Grecia, Alexander, who had his kingdom divided into four parts among his generals, and of one of these divisions, that of Lysimachus, the royal treasure was deposited in Pergamos, and Philæterus was the keeper of it. But he rebelled against his sovereign, and founded an independent kingdom of his own.*

Pergamos, then, famed for giving rise to a new dynasty formerly, can the more readily be conceived to be where the Antichrist will begin to

* Rollin's Ancient History.

develope his power; and the Church, the gathering of Jewish saints there, will have to stand against his rising influence. Accordingly, the Lord tells them in this Epistle, that he recognizes the danger of their position. "I know. . . where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." Thus, the comfort of His recognition of their case is laid up for them beforehand.

The Lord next proceeds with commendation.

And thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith.] We are not to confound these two things—holding fast the name of Jesus, and not denying His faith. For we find one expressed in the present tense—"thou *holdest fast* my name;" and the other in the past—"and *hast not denied* my faith." Now the "faith" here mentioned, may be taken to relate to the Lord's approaching advent; or perhaps, more generally it may denote the true worship of Christ, in connexion with the reception of His truth. They had not denied the faith, they had not apostatized, even in the days of martyrdom, but had maintained their ground; and doubtless, because of this previous faithfulness, the Lord could *now* say with the greater complacency, in reference to circumstances of still more aggravated temptation,—“thou *holdest fast* my name.” But what does this latter note of approbation mean, distinguishing it, as it appears we should, from the former—"not denying the faith?"

I submit, it refers to not allowing the pretensions of another, even the Antichrist—a title which designates not merely an *Opponent* of Christ, (against Christ) but a *Rival* of Christ, (instead of Christ); that is, one who will palm himself off upon the Jews as their expected Messiah! At the eventful crisis in question, the Lord recognizes this Church as holding fast His name, not being deceived by the Antichrist. Having believed that the true Messiah has already come, in the person of Jesus, they will with loyalty of heart, amidst the imposing pretensions of His enemy, look for His coming again.

The period contemplated will be not unlike to that in the history of Israel, when the servants of God, in Egypt, were confronted with the magicians, and had to withstand their lying miracles. In the thirteenth chapter, we have the “*lying*” miracles of Antichrist described, i. e., miracles wrought to establish a lie. And in the midst of such, no doubt, the Faithful remnant will not be without their *true* miracles, wrought in the name of Jesus. As that name worked wonders in the Apostles’ days, so it may in the coming dispensation of “the day of the Lord.” And this also, perhaps, is involved in the reference here to holding fast Christ’s name. But the Lord amplifies his commendation:—

Even in the days wherein Antipas was my

faithful martyr, who was slain among you.] Looking at the etymology of this name, "*Antipas,*" we may regard it as signifying *against all*—suggesting that there will be a confronting of the truth with universal enmity and opposition, but that this servant of the Lord will not have flinched or abated his testimony. Therefore, also, the honorable title is sealed to him—" *my faithful martyr.*" It is the same word that is applied to the Lord Jesus himself, "*the faithful witness.*" And truly, a real witnessing is the beginning of martyrdom. He who will witness for Christ, must make up his mind to bear His cross. He may not be called to suffer unto death, but he is to be prepared for it, if he will abide faithful unto the end.

This remarkable allusion to a person of whom we have no record in past history, (for the legend which goes under the name of "*Antipas,*" is admitted on all hands to be spurious) furnishes a further indication, that the Epistle before us is altogether prophetic. In the case of the ancient Church of *Smyrna*, we do know something of their Bishop, Polycarp, and of his sufferings; and so there is some colour for the popular opinion, that the Epistle to that Church, which contemplates a season of fiery persecution, relates to the past. But, nothing of what is specified here is on record about Pergamos. Neither the Scriptures, nor

ecclesiastical history furnish us with any corresponding information.

Where Satan dwelleth.] Here is a reiteration of the prominent fact which distinguishes the locality of Pergamos. It is the habitation of Satan, doubtless, as already observed, in the person of the Antichrist; on which account, the Lord's eye is peculiarly upon it. Just as Bethany is defined in the Gospel, from its being "the town of Mary and her sister Martha," (John xi. 1)—this was the association it had in the mind of God; so, Pergamos occupies the contemplation of the Lord Jesus, as the seat of his great "enemy." And it will be his place of abode, just as literally as that of the Church here addressed; for it is the same word which is used in reference to both: "where thou *dwest*:" "where Satan *dwesteth*."

We have thus gone through the commendation the Lord bestows upon this Church. But now comes the allegation of cause for grief and censure.

Ver. 14. *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.*] Of the angel of this Church, notwithstanding the good points about him, it is complained that he had suffered those to remain in the Church, who held the doctrine of Balaam, &c.; that is, instead

of putting them out, instead of purging them from the society of the faithful, he had allowed them to remain in communion. Now, if we turn to the book of Numbers, we shall see about this doctrine of Balaam. We there learn, that when Israel was about to enter the promised land, Balak, king of Moab, set himself against them, and called Balaam to curse them. This shadows forth the future working of Satan, by the Antichrist and his false prophet. Indeed, so close is the analogy between the accounts of the two histories, as at once to suggest to us, that the one is typical of the other. "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods : and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor : and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel." Now, at whose instigation was this ? We gather the answer from a subsequent chapter : "And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive ? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, *through the counsel of Balaam*, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord." Num. xxxi. 15, 16. Balaam's design, in which, alas ! he was too successful, was to tempt Israel, to cohabit with the women of Moab ; and so, at

last, to worship their false gods. The open enterprise of cursing the people of God, failed him and his patron, but this insidious device prevails.

Now, in the latter day, in Pergamos, where Satan's seat will be, there will be this holding "the doctrine of Balaam"—something of a repetition of the same temptation, combining fornication with idolatry—sins especially hateful to the Lord; and for toleration of those who teach these things, the Lord has somewhat against the Church of Pergamos. And he adds another item to the charge:—

Ver. 15. *So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.*] Hold with power, *cling to*, is the force of the original. We have had an allusion to the Nicolaitanes before, in the Epistle to the Church of Ephesus; but the occasion is very different; it is in connexion with that Church's commendation, in that they *hated the deeds* of the Nicolaitanes. Here the allusion is coupled with *blame*, because the Church of Pergamos harboured, so to speak, the attached votaries of the wicked system. See page 83.

Such is the corruption which will be at work in Pergamos, in the latter day—the period of the world's old age, as we may call it, when its bones shall be full of the sins of its youth. And the second Epistle of Peter abounds with allusions to

the same thing. “ But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways ; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you : whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” ch. ii. 1—3. Then, we have in the tenth verse ; “ But *chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*” Again, verses 12—14 : “ *These, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of things which they understand not ; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption ; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you ; having eyes full of adultery.*” Such licentious ones should not be allowed to feast with the people of the Lord ; but, just as we find the Church of Pergamos rebuked for suffering the association with them of those, “ who commit fornication, and eat things sacrificed unto idols ;”

so they, to whom Peter writes, seem admonished of the same ; and the description of the obnoxious parties is still more markedly identical : “ Which have forsaken,” he continues, ver. 15, “ the right way, and are gone astray, *following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor.*” Every reference in these passages, confirms the view that the Epistles—that to the Church of Pergamos, and the second of Peter—relate to the same period, “ the latter days.” Again, there is a remarkable similarity between the latter and the Epistle of Jude. See ver. 4—8 ; 10—13.

But to proceed : Hereupon ensues language of threatening.

Ver. 16. *Repent ; or else I will come* (literally, I am coming) *unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth.*] That is, the Lord will make war against them, as he will do against the whole Antichristian faction. In the nineteenth chapter, we find the time for this actually come. At the eleventh verse, the Lord is represented as going forth, with his armies in heaven following him. “ I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse ; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” Then we read at the seventeenth verse ; “ And I saw an angel standing in the sun ; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the

midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God ; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.” ver. 17—19. Thus the Lord is coming to make war with the whole Antichristian faction—the nations and their armies ; and all who secretly sympathize with them will be involved. And the issue is related, so as strongly to corroborate the view already thrown out, as to the Antitypical relation of these events to Israel’s former history. For the beast and the false prophet are taken and cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone ; just as the same fate is recorded of Balak and Balaam, that they were both slain in battle. Num. xxxi. 8. But what, at length, will be the fate of the followers of the beast ? The twenty first verse recites : “And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth.” Thus fulfilling the threatening, “I am coming unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth.”

Ver. 17. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*] See page 84.

We now come to the promise :—

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.] As in the case of all these Epistles, the promise is addressed in the singular number ; *To him* that overcometh. This is in order to sustain and comfort *individual* saints at the period in question, when the body corporate to which they shall belong may have fallen from the faith. (See page 93.) We know that in the case of Israel of old, the little remnant consisted of only Caleb and Joshua. They were faithful amidst the faithless ; and they alone of that generation, after wandering through the wilderness, were, at last, permitted to enter into the promised land. We can conceive, then, how the circumstance of this word of God being addressed *individually* to the saints is calculated to comfort them ; and that our Lord's saying, "*To him* that overcometh," &c., will be as cheering as though His eye of gracious recognition was realized as resting on each believer.

As to the *matter* of the promise, it is two-fold. In the first part is assured to the victor, the eating of "*the hidden manna.*" To understand this, we must refer back to the Old Testament. We learn there, that when the children of Israel were journeying through the wilderness, and wanted food,

God supplied them with manna from heaven. They gathered it every morning; but they were strictly prohibited by God, from gathering more than was sufficient for one day, except on the sixth day, when they were enjoined to gather a double quantity, to serve for the Sabbath day. And it was remarkable, that whereas, if on other days they transgressed the prohibition laid upon them, and gathered more than was necessary for the current day, the manna corrupted and became unfit for food; on the other hand, the extra portion gathered on the sixth day, and laid up for the Sabbath, corrupted not, and they were able to partake of it.

We find, further, that the Lord ordered some of this manna to be kept for a memorial to the children of Israel: “And Moses said, this is the thing which the Lord commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations,” (an omer was the quantity to be gathered daily for each person) “that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, take a pot and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations. As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.” Ex. xvi. 32—34. Accordingly, when the children of Israel entered

the promised land, this pot of manna had its place in the ark, together with the two tables of the law, and Aaron's rod that budded. And the Apostle Paul, enumerating the contents of the ark, takes care to include the same amongst them.

To understand, then, what is imported by the present promise, we must bear in mind that our Lord Jesus Christ, referring to the manna which came down from heaven, says of Himself: "I am the bread of life." And truly, He is this to all His saints; they walk by faith; and Christ is their life, just as bread—the fruit of the earth—is the staff of natural life. But He is now *hidden* with God; and, accordingly, while His saints have life in Him, the *glory* of that life is concealed; nor will it be revealed until He comes forth from the Father. As the Apostle says, "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Col. iii. 3, 4.

The Antitype, then, of the hidden manna, is the glorified humanity of the Lord Jesus, as reserved now in heaven, but to act by-and-bye as the radiating centre of all that glory which His saints shall partake of, when He comes again, and their present bodies of humiliation, are, in everlasting incorruptibility, fashioned and made "like unto his glorious body." Phil. iii. 21. In a word,

what is promised to him that overcometh, under this form of speech, is resurrection glory, after the pattern of the great Archetype thereof, the Lord Jesus.

Now, if we closely observe these Epistles, we shall see that a relation obtains between the circumstances of trial of each Church, and the promise addressed to it. Look, for example, at the Epistle preceding this—that to the Church of Smyrna. That Church is characterized by exposure to great persecution and tribulation. And, accordingly, the promise to it runs thus: “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death”—obviously appropriate, we see, to their case. Similarly we find it to be with this Church of Pergamos; its circumstances of trial, which are contemplated, we gather from the address:—“I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is”—that is, as already interpreted, the Devil having given his power to the Antichrist of the last days, the place in which the latter will commence his career will be Pergamos. And, in connexion with his seat there, there will, doubtless, be arrayed a most imposing display of grandeur, his court being kept up amidst the fascination of luxury and hospitality; as, when in the apostate times of Ahab and Jezebel, there were eight hundred and fifty false prophets fed at the royal table. 1 Kings xviii. 19.

These things, then, will try the witnesses of God located there. It will be hard for them, surrounded by the favoured partisans of the wicked one, to hold fast the name of Christ; and they will need all the support of their counter-hopes and prospects to keep them steadfast. Therefore, as though suiting His promise to the character of their temptation, the Lord says; "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." They need not regard the hospitality at the disposal of the Antichrist, Jesus will give them a better portion, even the joy of being associated with him in glory, when he comes again—when all their wilderness experience of grace will be changed into the enjoyment of His abiding presence. Such is the significant import of the first part of the promise.

And will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.] Here, again, we perceive an adaptation of the Lord's words to the circumstances of the faithful in Pergamos. In the confidence of him who shall then fill Satan's throne, his apostate flatterers will, doubtless, share. They will be his patronized friends and clients, to whom he will impart his counsels. From these, of course, the faithful servants of God will be excluded. The dark covenant and unholy league will be abhorred by them. "Oh my soul come not

thou into their secret," will constitute, we can conceive, their wary watchword. Accordingly, here is an intimation from their Lord and Master, that He will presently receive them into *His* glorious confidence; that they may rely upon His embracing them in the bonds of everlasting friendship.

For, in ancient times, when friendship existed between families, and they wished to perpetuate it amongst their descendants, a stone was wont to be divided, forming what was commonly called "the tally of hospitality," and the names of the parties were written upon the segments, which, after being mutually exchanged, were carefully preserved; till, at length, in any exigency, being produced by their possessors, they constituted a sacred claim upon the unreserved patronage and protection, sealed by such compact, between the original families. Thus the Lord, in assuring the faithful in Pergamos—"I will give him a white stone," seems to intimate, that, however cast out they might be by men, they might rely on Him for ultimate indemnity; and, meanwhile, for that responsive communion, on his part, which their enemies could not disturb. This also harmonizes with the purport of the promise, taken as a whole.

As to the stone being a *white* one, such was wont to be used as an indication of the innocence or acquittal of a party from the charge brought

against him ; just as, in our balloting box, a white bean is a token of a person's acceptability. And this additional idea easily accommodates itself to the promise as already explained. Hereby is pledged, in fact, the Lord's taking His people into His protection, and acknowledging them as His righteous ones—sealing them as *His* amidst all the desertion and calumny and treachery of the latter days.

The latter part of the promise, especially, seems to imply that these suffering saints, as an earnest of the future, will have that blissful communion with the Lord which their enemies will not be able to appreciate. It will be such peace, such joy, as will, indeed, pass all understanding. There are two or three passages in which reference is made to this writing of a name, and a "*new name.*" Look at the third chapter. The promise given there to the Church in Philadelphia is, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God ; which is New Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and *I will write upon him my new name.*" This series of promises is, of course, not to be confounded with the promise immediately before us. The former speaks of the name being written upon the believer, the latter of its being written in

the stone. But still the “*name*”—belonging as it does to the Person of the Lord Jesus—shows that there is a connexion between them all. Now, in the 19th chapter, this name appears to be formally interpreted for us. We find at the 11th verse, a vision of the Lord Jesus going forth, accompanied by his saints, on His career of vengeance: “I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire; and, on his head, were many crowns; and he had a *name written that no man knew but he himself.*” Perhaps, this is the very name mentioned, in the 16th verse:—“And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a *name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.*” Again, we read, in verse 13, “He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and *his name is called The Word of God.*” But here are two names. Are we to understand that they have the same import? Even so. His “new name,” at all events, seems bound up in these two titles. Then, what is it?—Because, if we can reach to the understanding of it in reference to Christ, we may be able to perceive how it is spoken of as attaching to the saints. If we turn to Matt. xi. 27, we may find a clue to this in the remarkable words there uttered by our blessed Lord:—“All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the

Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." *No man knoweth the Son but the Father.*—How are we to take this ? Do not the saints know the Son ? Is not the Son the Christ, the Word of God—in the sense of revealing the person and character of God, and do not his people know Him ? Most truly. But, whilst the title of Christ is "*the Word,*" we read, in the 1st of John, that, "In the beginning," not only "was the Word, and the Word was with God," but the "*Word was God.*" And, in this point of view, no man knoweth the Son but the Father, for God only can know God. So that, while his saints take cognizance of Him ; and, in the knowledge of Him, possess eternal life, it is only *horizons*, as it were, of the infinite that they will ever take in, beyond which—that is, into the infinite itself—they will be able to penetrate only in adoring worship ; for there will be the profound abyss of Deity, by virtue of which He has a name that no one can know save He himself.

This view of the "new name" attaching to the Lord Jesus, by virtue of the *substratum* of Deity in His mysterious Person, is perhaps confirmed in Phil. ii. 9, 10 :—"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things

under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ;”—that is, Jesus will be revealed as Lord—*one* Lord—there will be “one Lord.” But this relation points onward even “to the glory of God the Father,” which, obviously, cannot be separated from the glory of the Son, in the one indivisible Godhead. And, thus, the name, Lord, as here defined, involves a depth not to be explored by any created intellect.

But now, coming back to the promise to the Church of Pergamos ; to the “new name written on the stone, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it,” we may affix an analogous meaning ; for what will be the glory of the victors, thus addressed, but participation, in their measure, in the glory of Christ their head, with whom they are also said to be made kings and priests unto God.

But, as the incommunicable glory of absolute Godhead in Jesus, they will themselves not be able to fathom, so shall *their* glory have a phase not to be fully appreciated by the creatures of God beneath them. As *now*, their dignity is altogether hidden, and it doth not yet appear what they shall be ; so, even when the day of their manifestation arrives, there will be *that*, in their relation to Jesus, which others will never be able to comprehend. This I take to be the purport

of this promise. It is a set off against the temptations of the faithful in Pergamos. The Lord might have expressed it in one phrase ; but He gives various aspects to it for their comfort, that their faith might grasp it the better. We shall have the meaning of “the new name” brought before us again, when we come to the Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia, and to the nineteenth chapter. It may then please God to give us more light upon it.*

Now for a closing word of application to ourselves. Satan’s “seat” is not at present visible, so that the homage of men can be formally rendered to it. But, let us not forget there is the “*course of this world*”—a current, as it were, created by Satan, which is absorbing into it the mass of mankind, Eph. ii. 2; and against this, Christ’s faithful ones have to hold fast. “They are not of the world,” says Jesus, “even as I am not of the world.” John xvii. 14. Accordingly, we all need the contemplation of the promise addressed to the remnant in Pergamos, whilst, for our faithfulness in confessing Christ, we have to forego

* The Author would here add, that, in the exposition of this book, his devout Christian readers may be helpers to him in his labours; and that not only by their prayers in his behalf, and exercise of faith—expecting a blessing from the study of it; but, if any of them have light given them upon the subject, as the work proceeds, by communicating it to him. It is said, “Be ye subject one to another,” and this is one way of complying with the precept.

the world's favor, and incur its frown. Let us not suffer the thought to come into our minds, that, because the scene of these Churches is laid in the future, therefore there is no application of what is addressed to them, to ourselves. As an antidote, it seems, to such a thought, these Epistles are directed to every one who hears them. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." The world, we know, is essentially the same, at all times, in its enmity against God; and, if faithful, we must all, in every generation, bear the cross, although there may be "the burden and heat of the day" yet to come to others.

Thus, their promises may be our portion. And oh! if our cross-bearing were what it ought to be; if we realized our calling as the Church of God, these promises would not be treated with indifference, but they would be estimated as the joy and rejoicing of our hearts. And, indeed, it is an authentic fact in the history of various persecutions of old, that, in the promises of this book, however partially understood, the harassed children of God have found no little comfort; they have supplied them with meat to eat that the world knew not of. Oh! that such experience may be awakened and promoted in every heart that is interested in this exposition of "the Revelation." Amen.

CHAPTER II.

SECTION FOURTH.

Verses 18—29.

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write ; These things saith the son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass ;

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works ; and the last *to be* more than the first.

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee. because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication ; and she repented not.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death ; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts : and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak ; I will put upon you none other burden.

25 But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations :

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Ver. 18. *And unto the angel of the Church in Thyatira write.*] Even in profane history, Thyatira is not a very celebrated place. And it is only noted in the *Acts* as the native city of Lydia, a seller of purple, who was converted by the preaching of the Apostle Paul in Philippi.

These things saith the Son of God.] Here, unlike what obtains in the addresses to the preceding Churches, there is a title assumed, “the Son of God,” which is not found in the recorded vision of the first chapter. It is adopted from another portion of the word—doubtless, the second Psalm. For, “*Son of God*” is the very title there given to our blessed Lord; and in connexion with a similar subject of promise,—“*power over the nations.*” It may be well to compare the passages together: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take council together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands assunder, and cast away their cords from us.” ver. 1—3. Here we see the rebellious effrontery which will yet characterize the nations. But, it is added—expressive of the Divine contempt with which it will be met—“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.” ver. 4. In the context, we find clearly implied, the phase which

this rebellion of the nations will assume, even opposition to the throne of David. And, of course, at the period thus contemplated, faithful witnesses amongst the Jewish people—a portion of whom, as we have seen, will constitute these seven Churches—will assert the coming of the true King, and by their testimony confront the mad infidelity of the nations; just as Moses and Aaron of old, maintained God's sovereignty over Israel before Pharoah. Accordingly, here will be the word to sustain their faith:—"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, *Thou art my Son*; this day have I begotten thee." ver. 6, 7. That is, it is certified, that, in the character of the Son of David, raised from the dead, and thus demonstrated (Rom. i. 3, 4) to be *more* than Son of David—even Son of God, Messiah will take possession of His throne. Then, in the next verses, we read the Father's promise to the Son of triumph over all His enemies: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." ver. 8, 9.

Now, the second Psalm having brought us to this point, how runs the promise announced to the Church of Thyatira? To the very same effect. See

the 26th and 27th verses: “ He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers.” Thus, the second Psalm and the Epistle before us, alike relate to the period in which the nations will be in insurrection against the Lord; and also contemplate Christ in the character, “ *Son of God,*” in which His glory will then be confessed by a faithful remnant. But, it is in the same character we have seen, He will be vjndicated by the Father against his adversaries; and so the title further portends judgment. In this respect, therefore, it comports with what follows:—

Who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire.] This signifies His ability to detect evil, and to wither it up—a description intended, perhaps, to stand in contrast with that of the Antichrist, as represented by the little horn, in the Book of Daniel:—“ In this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man.” Dan. vii. 8. The Lord Jesus has more than this. “ He hath his eyes like a flame of fire.” To the same effect, we read further:—

And his feet are like fine brass.] This indicates a work of judgment as before Him, for which he is duly qualified. For, in former times, the feet of cattle were used to tread out corn; and so, this action of the feet came to be expressive of the process of conquest over enemies, as for example,

Micah iv. 13 :—“ Arise, and thresh, O ! daughter of Zion : for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people.” Thus the purpose for which Israel will be used, when the Lord comes, will be to tread down the nations ; as we read elsewhere :—“ Thou art my battle axe, and weapons of war : for with thee will I break in pieces the nations ; and with thee will I destroy kingdoms.” Jer. li. 20.

It may be observed, in passing, that it appears there is a distinction between the future destiny of Ephraim, or the ten tribes, and that of Judah, or the two tribes. To the former is allotted the *executive*, as it were,—to the latter the *legislative*, in Messiah’s kingdom ; as it is written, “ Ephraim is the strength of my head, Judah is my law-giver.” Psalm lx. 7.

But, to pursue the allusion before us : in the 63rd of Isaiah, the prophet sees a mighty Conqueror approaching, and asks the question, “ Who is this that cometh from Edom,” or Idumea, (where, it would seem, the Lord is to commence one stage of His avenging march,) “ with dyed garments from Bozrah ?” (the capital of Edom) “ this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength ?” ver. 1. Then follows the answer to this challenge, “ I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” Hereupon the enquiry is resumed. “ Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments

like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" ver. 2. The solemn reply is—"I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." ver. 3, 4. It is commonly said,—and it is a painful instance of the power of prejudice even in godly minds,—that this passage relates to the *first* advent of the Lord Jesus. But it is forgotten that He did not then come to judge; He came to save. His garments were, it is true, stained with blood, but it was His own blood, not the blood of his enemies. Again, it is said, "*the day of vengeance is in mine heart.*" Now the day of vengeance was not *then* in our Lord's heart. And, accordingly, in Luke iv., where he quotes Isaiah lxi., opening his commission, as it were, in the synagogue at Nazareth, He carefully stops short, so as to leave "the day of vengeance" for the future.

Thus it is clear, beyond all controversy, that this language of our Lord refers only to his second advent. And then it is that His feet will be like fine brass, *i. e.* smelted—which cannot be tarnished—signifying that, whilst evil is being trodden down by Him, there shall no

contamination accrue from the process. To see the connection of this description with the state of the Church of Thyatira, we have only to look into the body of the Epistle. We there find mention of a woman—“*that woman Jezebel*”—being suffered to teach and propagate idolatry and licentiousness; and allusion is, also, made to a mysterious character of iniquity, prevailing there, called “the depths of Satan.”

But, now, to take the contents of the Epistle in order. The first thing we find after the expression, “*I know thy works*”—which is common to all the Epistles, and has been already noticed—is commendation. Thus, the Lord fails not to give credit where it is due; but, as we have seen, His sensitiveness to evil is not hereby impaired.

Ver. 19. *And charity*] or *love*. This is the first thing honour is put upon. And everywhere, throughout the Scriptures, we find the same importance attached to this grace: “Charity never faileth;” “the greatest of these”—faith, hope, and charity—“is charity;” 1 Cor. xiii. 8, 13. “Love is the fulfilling of the law;” Rom. xiii. 10. “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha;” 1 Cor. xvi. 22. “Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;” Eph. vi. 24. Again, “He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love;” 1 John iv. 8. We may know a theory about God;

but, without love, we cannot know God; yea, every Divine truth, known aright, leads to love. And so, the more knowledge of the truth we possess, the more love should exhale from us on all around.

And service.] This assures us the love of this Church is not a mere sentiment or profession, but that it goes forth in the rounds of dutiful obedience, and ministry to the glory of God. If we apply it to the past, we can imagine how manifold were the charitable occupations of Christians in the primitive times, having to comfort, protect, and help each other, in the face of persecutions from their enemies.

And faith.] This may be taken to relate to the *root* of their love, and service; because they are the fruit alone of faith. We first believe in, and love God, as revealed in Jesus Christ; then, we obey his commandments. But it may rather be, that the “faith” here commended by the Great Head of the Church, besides implying this general confidence in God, has more especially for its object the things written in this book, which, in the day of the Lord, will begin to be fulfilled. Our Lord’s encouraging words in the Gospel may thus reach their mark:—“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” Luke xxi. 28.

And thy patience.] Their love, service, and faith, already named, make up one category. This grace begins another; for the pronoun is again employed—"and *thy*" patience. Perhaps the design of the renewed emphasis is to specify "*patience*" as the distinguishing characteristic of the Angel personally. But, it is important for all God's children to cultivate! As to the great incentive to this grace—the Scriptures continually urge the contemplation of the coming of the Lord:—"Behold, the husbandman," says James, "waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." And what is his improvement of this? "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." Again: "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh;" James v. 7, 8. And, in the Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia, we read: "Because thou hast kept the *word of my patience*, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Rev. iii. 10. Now, what is *the word of Christ's patience*, but that which inspires patience, even the promise of His coming—that event on which His own patience is suspended? For, He now sits at the right hand of God, "*expecting* till his enemies be made his footstool." Heb. x. 13. In fact, the patience of the Church is sympathy with Jesus.

And thy works ; and the last to be more than the first.] Thus, there is contemplated a *growing* faithfulness in this Church, unlike the Church of Ephesus,—who had “left their first love,”—and to whom, therefore, the exhortation is, “Repent, and *do the first works.*” The love of Ephesus had practically cooled. Their last works were not more than the first, not equal to the first ; but, in the Church of Thyatira, their “last” was more than “the first.” Still, it is instructive to see that, whilst the Church of Thyatira shines forth in this respect ; in another, the Church of Ephesus excels them. They had “tried” them which said they were apostles. There is active zeal, at Ephesus, for the glory of God. They do not believe men to be apostles on their own assertion. But, in this department of duty, the Church of Thyatira is said to fail, although in persevering love, and obedience, in general, they are conspicuous above the Church of Ephesus. They come short in becoming indignation at imposture. This may illustrate how one Church and one Christian may learn of another. Here is a brother in whom we may observe many defects, and we may be remarked as happily superior to him ; and yet, if we consider, we may find that, as a child of God, he has some excellency in which he might be a model to us. In fact, there are different attainments in the Church of God, and

what is lacking in one individual, is ordained to be made up by something to be found in another. There is a mutual dependence among the members of Christ's body. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee." 1 Cor. xii. 21. And the circumstance of there being flaws and defects of character in God's children, instead of hindering union, is the very thing which ought to incite to it. So that, when we think of the state of the Church now, torn as it is into various sects and denominations, and how defects are made pretexts for dissension, we ought to be deeply humbled. Let us not, then, observe the fact before us,—the mutually compensating character of these Churches,—without improvement; without deriving from it an incentive to the cultivation of that true Scriptural unity, which, contrary to the popular notions of even good men of our day, wherein a limit is set to it, ought to bring all who hold the head into one visible community for regular worship, as well as for occasional intercourse.

The next thing to be noticed is the censure of this Church.

Ver. 20. *Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.]* Let us

remark here, first, that, not merely is a woman mentioned, but that a name is given her, as though to suggest to us the true interpretation. The name is that of a woman with whom we are already familiar, from Old Testament history. Look at the 16th chap. of the 1st Book of Kings. We read at the thirtieth verse: "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal, in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, than all the kings of Israel that were before him." Thus, the enormities of Ahab's impious reign were perpetrated at the instigation of this woman, Jezebel. She conceived, it would appear, the design of entirely rooting out from the land, the worship of the true God. And, amongst her measures for this, was the slaying the prophets of the Lord. Elijah had to flee for his life from her. And the little remnant of the people of God were so persecuted by her, as to hide themselves from notice.

Can we fail, then, to regard her as a type

of that great persecuting power in the latter days, Babylon, which will use the empire of the coming Antichrist, to spread her abominations throughout the world, and will be signalized, amongst other things, for shedding the blood of saints and prophets among the Jewish people. "BABYLON THE GREAT"—"the Whore," in Revelation, will ride the Beast. And so Jezebel dealt by Ahab, she used his name, and seal, and authority, in general, to compass her wicked projects.

If we look at the seventeenth of Revelation, we shall see how remarkably type and antitype harmonize. "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore, that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls." ver. 1—4. Does not this answer to the description given of Jezebel in the book of Kings, using Ahab as the instrument

of her wicked designs, and addicted to every meretricious art, as we may gather from the record, that, even amidst the Divine judgments which were overtaking her, she “painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.” 2 Kings ix. 30.

But to continue: “Having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots, and abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints.” ver. 4—6. Does not this, again, answer to the persecuting character of Jezebel given in the Old Testament? Only, here it may be well to observe, that it is the *literal* city Babylon yet to be revived, of which, I believe this woman to be the personification. Nor should such an event appear to us incredible. We have already had occasion to notice the awful *mimicry* of the ways of God, which is hereafter to characterize the devices of Satan. And this will be one feature of it, that, whereas God will have a place, even JERUSALEM, where He will put His name, and whence truth and holiness will flow forth throughout the nations; so, Satan will have his city, BABYLON, the centre and focus of all wickedness. It is true that now Babylon is in a state of comparative ruin; but it is not reduced to the condition

prophesied concerning it ; nor has it been destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah, Isa. xiii. 19 ; and, ere that consummation arrives, there is Scriptural warrant for believing that it will be reconstructed—and by supernatural energy, till at length it will topple to its fall, and its destruction suddenly come “in one hour!” If we had no more revealed to us concerning it, than what is contained in this book of the Revelation, it ought to be enough to inspire this conviction. But, we have other Scriptures bearing on the subject. Look, for example, at the 5th of Zechariah, the 5th verse : “Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? and he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. And behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead ; and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah ; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.” Thus, the woman called wickedness is compressed, as it were, for a season, in the ephah. “Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings ; for they had wings like the wings of the stork :” (this denotes the agency in question to be not only

supernatural, but evil, for the stork is an unclean bird) “and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in *the land of Shinar*”: (the very locality by which the literal Babylon is defined elsewhere, see Gen. x. 10) “and it shall be established and set there upon her own base.” Combining, then, with the significant allusions already remarked on, the plain unambiguous assurance of this prophecy, it cannot be doubted that *the woman Jezebel* here presented to us, typifies Babylon the Great—the literal revived Babylon that is to corrupt the nations of the earth.

But, in the Epistle before us, this woman assumes to be “a prophetess.” How are we to reconcile this? My conception is this, that whilst the city, Babylon the Great, will be the prolific teeming source of the abominations that will be propagated in the latter day; Thyatira, in the person of an abandoned woman, will have one stream of the wicked influence actively at work in her, comparable to the old Testament type, and so named after her. And the blame put upon the Angel of the Church there is, that he suffers her to diffuse her poisonous teaching, and to corrupt the people. But the Lord goes on:—

Ver. 21. *And I gave her space to repent of her*

fornication ; and she repented not.] Now look at the 9th chapter of this book, verses 20, 21. After a recital of terrible plagues, which shall have run their course on the earth, it follows: “ And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.” Here seems a reference to space given for repentance ; and, doubtless, to those who will be votaries of Babylon. Thus the analogy between the centre of the corrupt system and her characteristic satellite, continues ; and what completes it follows :—

Ver. 22. *Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation. except they repent of their deeds.*] How suitable a retribution to the career of an infamous woman—her exposure, as it were, in the very haunt of her wickedness ; an impotent and wretched spectacle to her paramours—terrified at what is coming upon themselves ! But this is obviously the adaptation to the case of Thyatira of the threatening on the larger scale, which we find denounced against Babylon :—“ she shall be utterly burned with fire ; for strong is the Lord

God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning: standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come." Rev. xviii. 10.

Ver. 23. *And I will kill her children with death.*] Doubtless, there will be an accomplishment of this, in regard to the literal offspring of this abandoned woman in Thyatira. But, in their full reach of interpretation, these words also belong to Babylon, one feature of the vengeance on which is thus described in the 137th Psalm: "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." ver. 9.

But now, to apply these things to ourselves, as we proceed. With our eye upon this broad fact, that, for evil tolerated in the Church of Thyatira, that community is brought before us as incurring the judgment of God—let us remember that God has a Church in this country; and, so far as profession goes, and thus, responsibility, it comprehends, we may say, all the inhabitants, including the Queen, the legislature, and executive dignitaries of the realm. The nation, in fact, is another aspect of the Church. Think, then, of the corruption which is bound up with this professing body,

even idolatry and blasphemy, to the encouragement of which the resources of the nation are applied. The facts are too glaring to be disputed. There is the endowment of Maynooth College in Ireland, for propagating Popery; the maintenance of Popish Bishops and their staffs in our Colonies; and measures of a similar apostate character, which may be easily called to mind. And these things are being perpetrated in the face of day. Every one knows of them; the public papers descant upon them; and they are regarded as improvements of our social condition. So that if any one is bold enough to animadvert on them, he is considered a poor narrow-minded bigot! Such is the unblushing character of the evil which is done among us, and which attaches to us *as a Church*. For, let it be remembered, the parties who have contrived, carried, and now support these measures, *profess* to belong to the Church; and with very few exceptions, are recognised as distinguished members of the Church of England, pursuing their antichristian course with perfect impunity. Surely, then, the Church at large is answerable for the enormity; just as will be the Church of Thyatira, for harbouring “that woman Jezebel,” and suffering her to inculcate her hideous doctrines. And, unless we repent, will not the Lord pour out his wrath upon England, as he threatens to do upon the Church of Thyatira?

Oh! it is matter for serious consideration, how the principle here involved affects the corporate body with which we are connected. Children of God! show that you are on the Lord's side by witnessing for Him against the evil. No doubt, this faithfulness will render you a sign spoken against on every side. But your record will be written on high, and when the Lord appears in His glory, you will not be forgotten amongst those who will have continued with Him in His temptations.

And all the Churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts.] Such will be the moral result of the Lord's dealings with Thyatira. If we take this as referring to the demonstration of the Divine justice in the due punishment of Jezebel, which will be exhibited to the different gatherings of Jewish saints in Asia, we have what corresponds with it, on the larger scale of the Antitype, in the recorded triumph of the whole Jewish nation, when, Babylon being destroyed, their oppression will have come to an end:—"The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." Psalm xcvi. 2, 3. Most strange it is, that this striking parallel between the cases of Jezebel and Babylon should

have escaped the notice of our Commentators. Indeed, we should not say it has escaped them altogether, but, intimidated it would appear, by the marvel of it, from crediting the revival of the literal Babylon, and that Babylon means Babylon as truly as Jerusalem means Jerusalem, they have been engaged in prosecuting a wrong comparison, and so the analogy has been lost upon them. They have not been able to follow it out with any accuracy.

But, let us look at this universal appreciation by the Seven Churches of the Lord's penetrating omniscience and discriminating justice, in another point of view. It may relate to the *morale* of his dealings, not with Jezebel only, but with her corrupt followers from amongst the Jews in Thyatira; and so the parallel application, on a larger scale, is to God's vindication of himself in the destruction of Babylon's associates everywhere throughout the world. Now this consideration sends us to the Old Testament Scriptures, where, it is observable, we meet with the Lord's appropriation of the very features of character He claims here, almost in the same words, in connexion with his judicial dealings with the apostate Jews, in the latter day.

Let us turn to Jeremiah xvii. The chapter begins with a reference to the sin of the Jews. We read, at the 5th verse:—"Thus saith the

Lord, cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." I have no doubt this refers, in strictness, to the followers of the Antichrist in the latter day, who will delude many of the Jewish people into leaning on him, instead of their true Messiah. The Lord then pronounces a threatening upon such:—"For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh: but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited." verse 6. On the other hand, a blessing is pronounced on the remnant who continue faithful:—"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." ver. 7, 8. Hereupon, immediately following this two-fold delineation of character and retribution, we have this striking oracular statement:—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." ver. 9, 10; see also Psalm vii. 9. It is manifest there is here contemplated a very fearful phase of

iniquity, on which the Lord exercises a rigid scrutiny. And herein, it would seem from the appropriation by our Lord, in this epistle, of the same remarkable style, that Thyatira will be implicated. This implication is not a little confirmed by the words which follow :—

Ver. 24. *But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan as they speak.*] Here is an allusion to certain “*depths of Satan,*” and, if we look again into the Old Testament, we shall, perhaps, be able to further identify what is meant. In the 28th of Isaiah, for example, there seems to be depicted some dark system of iniquity, which might well go by this name. We read, in the 14th verse:—“Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men that rule the people that is in Jerusalem : Because ye have said, we have made *a covenant with death,* and *with hell are we at agreement ;* when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us : for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.” Now this complacent confidence, while perpetrating evil, seems to rest on a consciousness of supernatural support, and thus is not unlike what is suggested by the evil spoken of here, in the contemplation of the case of Thyatira. Satan will there have “*depths*” of subtlety in operation,

and they who are initiated into them will, perhaps, scornfully reason against the little remnant who stand aloof, that their fastidiousness arises from their not having *knowledge* enough. And so these apostates will congratulate themselves upon their superiority to the restraints of traditional conceit and timidity, while they rock themselves to ruin. In the present day, even, there are some things which might well be called “depths of Satan.” A popular French writer, whose works are being translated and extensively circulated in this country, in the course of a fulsome panegyric on France, as commissioned to enfranchise the nations with liberty and to save the world, speaks of “*God appearing upon earth in his incarnation of '89;*” and the French Revolution of that day—the most fearful eruption of human depravity which the civilized world, perhaps, has ever exhibited, combined with the career of the Maid of Orleans, he denominates “*our two redemptions.*” Again, he insists on it that the great idea of *sacrifice* has been developed in France alone, inasmuch as she alone of the nations not living for herself, has “*proclaimed and sealed with her blood the law of fraternity,*” and has so often “*given her life for the world.*” Thus this author takes the sublimest mysteries of Christianity, and uses them as vehicles for his corrupt notions. He does not verbally deny the truth, but quietly

abstracting from it its very essence, substitutes instead his barefaced pantheism; and all this he recommends as composing the basis of even infant education, apostrophising thus: "*Child, let this be thy first Gospel, thy staff of life, the aliment of thy heart.*"* Now, is not this an awful, while covert specimen of Satanic "depths?" Suggesting to us, as by rehearsal, what is to be apprehended in the last days, when Satan will revel in his feats of delusion, "knowing that his time is short." How severe, then, the encounter, against which, the little remnant here contemplated, will have to stand firm!

To proceed, the Lord says to them—

I will put upon you none other burden.] That is, considering they will have enough with which to contend, in the foregoing depths of Satan, the Lord will spare them from any further endurance. The burden of inevitable judgment allotted to apostates shall not be laid upon them. It is in this sense of ordained judgment that the word "*burden*" is employed elsewhere. See 2 Kings ix. 25.

Ver. 25. *But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.*] Whatever faithfulness; whatever zeal had characterized them; they are to maintain unto the end. We may conceive with what comfort and consolation these words will be read

* "The People," by M. Michelet, Member of the Institute of France.

by and bye, by these faithful witnesses of the Lord. And, doubtless, the circumstance of there being nothing else said to them,—for example, to enjoin the withdrawal of themselves from that Church—is instructive. For, in the Church of God established in this land, there is to be found, as has been already observed, great and deplorable evil, somewhat akin to what is here denounced. There is a cleaving to union with an adulterous State. In other words, there is a suffering of the State to have full communion with us as a Church, although false doctrine, and even idolatry is encouraged by her. And her usurpation in sacred things is most fearful; witness the extinction of spiritual functions in Ireland, in the cutting off ten bishopricks there! And in this country, the same mode of dealing with the Church *was* contemplated, if, indeed, it be now abandoned. All this, I say, is suffered; the members of the Church suffer it; some of our Clergy, and even our Bishops lend their voices to it. The consequence is, that some of God's children, who see the flagrancy of such a state of things, are ready to forsake the Church of their Fathers. In many cases they have already forsaken it, having considered it imperative on them to do so. Now, to all such, the language used to the Church of Thyatira is well suited. If ever there were occasion for the faithful to secede from their Church, it would be in

the case of Thyatira. But this is not the course prescribed to them, but simply—"that which thou hast already, hold fast till I come." And so we should realize the Lord as speaking to us, as though He said,—‘shut not your eyes to the evil,—sympathise with me in regard to it—but still look upon yourselves as the real nucleus of the Church, and witness for me till I come.’

Ver. 26—28. *And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.*]

Such is the special promise made to this Church; and the peculiarity in it, is, the circumstance of its being addressed, not only to "him that overcometh," as in the promises to the other Churches; but also, to "him that keepeth Christ's works to the end." Perhaps from this additional inscription we may gather, that, as in the coming day, extraordinary works will be performed by Satan; so God will put forth His marvellous power. There will be, perhaps, a competition between diabolical and Divine miracles, as when Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses; and it will behove the servants of God to be tenacious of His testimony, so as not to give place, for a moment, to the enemy's pretensions.

As to the *subject* of the promise, it is twofold :—
“power over the nations ;” and “the morning star.” The first—“power over the nations,” is said by our Lord, at the 27th verse, to be that which He has received of His Father ; and in the 2nd Psalm, as we have already seen, after mention of the confederacy of the nations, this investiture is thus rehearsed ; “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree : the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ; thou shalt break them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” ver. 6—9. This language, addressed by the Father to the Son, we cannot doubt, contains the commission to which our Lord here refers. And truly, even now, the nations are ready to rise against the Lord ; chafing at His restraints ; and eager to combine in any enterprise that portends their own aggrandizement. Witness the infidelity which is showing itself in the political movements and revolutions going on around us. And what will be the end of all this ? when *he* comes forth who is spoken of in Isaiah, as “Lucifer, son of the morning ;” and who, endued with supernatural powers, will put himself at the head of the nations, and develope human energies up to such a dizzy

summit, that men will at last think of becoming independent of God, the mere personification in their mind of *nature's* laws! Surely, what we see, is ominous of what impends. But, no matter what the consummated rebellion, it shall be suppressed. "THEN," we read, (that is, after the second advent—we need not here define the time more exactly) "when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have *put down all rule and all authority and power*. For he must reign till he hath put all things under his feet," &c. 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. Thus, while the fact is confirmed, that all rule, and authority, and power, will yet rise in insurrection against God, an universal subjection shall be achieved by Christ; and the promise to the faithful in the Church of Thyatira is, that in this process, they shall be associated with their Lord.

Thus, too, in the vision recorded in the 19th chapter; after a description of the Lord Jesus going forth to battle, we read:—"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." ver. 14, 15. Here is fulfilled the promise to the faithful in Thyatira. They are

with the Lord Jesus when he comes to subdue the rebellious nations.

The second promise:—I will give unto him “*the morning star*,” is but an enlargement of the former, denoting that it is the *preliminary* part of our Lord’s reign, which is specially referred to. For, at the 16th verse of chapter 22nd, our Lord, assuming the same designation, describes himself thus: “I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.” Now let us remember that the title he adopts in addressing this Church is “the Son of God,”—a title, as we saw from the 2nd Psalm, connected with His achievements upon the Davidic throne—His bruising the nations. Here, then, the Lord, as “the offspring of David,” that is seated upon His throne, is also “the bright and morning star,”—intimating, that in His career as the Man of War, ridding His kingdom of His enemies, He will be like the morning star—the harbinger of the brighter day, the reign of peace, when he shall be the Antitype of Solomon. Baalam, also, alludes to a “star” in his prophecy, in the 24th of Numbers: “I shall see him, but not now, I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.” ver. 17. Observe, here again the *Star* is introduced in

connexion with judgment on enemies. In fact, the Jewish people, when their deliverance is consummated, will bless the world at large : and, as a work of destruction on their adversaries will precede that portentous deliverance, participation in this work is naturally accompanied by a reference to the final issue, the symbolical earnest of which is “the morning star.” So much for the solution of the remarkable terms of this promise.

The closing declaration follows :—

Ver. 29. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*] This oracular utterance occupies a different position in the present epistle to that which it has in the preceding. There, it comes after the *preceptive* clauses. Here, after *the promise*. The design of this variation may be to secure attention to the *whole* of what the Lord says ; to shew that the instruction is not to be viewed apart from the promise, nor the promise apart from the instruction, but that each alike is to be valued. With regard to the present promise, it may, perhaps, appear strange that—to be used as God’s instruments in bruising the nations, should have been made matter of promise at all. But, surely, if it be compatible for the Lord Jesus to enter the lists against His enemies, and he now sits expecting the time to arrive, it cannot be incompatible for His saints to look forward to their part in the eventful transaction. And it is to be

observed that, as when that time comes, *the Lord* cannot be accused of acting in hatred, (for by his present long suffering and forbearance, He will have demonstrated the contrary,) so, his saints will be exempted from the like imputation. For they are now loving to all men, spending themselves for them; judging themselves, moreover, before that day when they shall be the executors of judgment on others. At least, such is their calling; their old nature, which wars against their new, they daily give up to crucifixion with Christ, mortifying "their members which are upon the earth." Accordingly, when the crisis arrives for their uniting with Him in taking vengeance, it will be manifested that the exercise is, with them, also, one of *holiness*, not of hatred. We read of a magistrate of old, who, when his own son committed a crime, punishable with death by the law, hesitated not to condemn him, and he was, accordingly, executed. Now, after acting thus, when he inflicted similar justice upon others, surely the impression would be irresistible that he was not actuated by passionate, self-pleasing impulse, but by an absorbing sense of duty. Thus, then, when the career of judgment sets in, which the children of God will administer, as joint executors with their Great Head, they shall be vindicated from the charge of deficiency in human tenderness, and their procedure will be, as

fruit in due season, just as legitimate as the grace and patience which now belong to them, under the present dispensation.

Thus, all that is needed to make the present promise congenial to us, is having the same mind as our Great Head, and the more we have of this, and the more we walk with God, the more such promise will commend itself to us. Congeniality with God is the very best preparation for understanding the communications He makes to us. And, when this is enjoyed, all and every part of Scripture will be realized to be profitable. Then we shall be able to enter upon the study of every subject on which it treats, with advantage and refreshment. On the other hand, they who walk at a distance from God, cannot be thorough readers of His word, and will stumble at the plainest truths. The truth before us, for example,—that God is represented as now so gracious, and yet that these threatened judgments will be poured out on men—this truth will be full of difficulty to such. As for the book of Revelation, it will be utterly neglected by them. Let us, then, beware of supposing that there is any portion of God's word irreconcilable with another, or barren of spiritual profit. The Bible is both a refectory and an arsenal, and what belongs not to the one department does to the other. Nor must we be indifferent to *anything* it contains. The difficulties

we may meet with should be matters of exercise to faith and prayer.

As a matter of fact, it may be well to subjoin to the consideration of this Epistle, that by the *Alogi*, an heretical sect of the second century, the genuineness of the Apocalypse was denied, on the ground of its containing this Epistle, addressed to a Christian Church at Thyatira, whereas, as they alleged, no such Church existed at the time it purported to be written. And Thyatira being the locality of that sect—as well as their reputed cleverness—lends some weight, it must be admitted, to their testimony. Gibbon, the historian, with his usual industry in suggesting difficulties wherever the authority of Revelation is concerned, takes care to mention this circumstance, adding, that—“Epiphanius, who allows the fact, extricates himself from the difficulty by ingeniously supposing that John wrote in the spirit of prophecy.” But, whilst the view thus ascribed to Epiphanius, touching this Epistle, is exactly that which is contended for in the present exposition, touching all the Epistles, yet it is right to say, that, on examination, I find this learned author has misrepresented Epiphanius; for, his position is rather this, that a Christian Church being in

Thyatira when John wrote, the Epistle to it is prophetic of the corruption which subsequently characterized it under the imposture of Montanus, and his prophetesses Maximilla and Priscilla. Epiphanius, in fact, seems to have misunderstood the point of argument of the Alogi, and to have assumed their assertion to be only this, that *no such corrupt Church* as John describes in his Epistle, existed in Thyatira in his day. But the words of the Alogi, which Epiphanius quotes, can by no means be reduced to this; they are these:—
 εἶτα τινες ἐξ αὐτῶν παλιν ἐπιλαμβάνονται τοῦτου τοῦ ῥήτου ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλυψῇ τῇ αὐτῇ, καὶ φασκουσι ἀντιλεγοντες· ὅτι εἶπε παλιν· γράψον τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῷ ἐν Θυατείροις, καὶ οὐκ ἐνὶ ἐκεῖ ἐκκλησία Χριστιανῶν ἐν Θυατείρῃ, πῶς οὖν ἐγράφε τῇ μὴ οὕσῃ;—“ Moreover, some of them (the Alogi) seize upon this passage in this same Apocalypse, (Rev. ii. 18) and allege by way of opposition, (i. e. to the genuineness of the book) that it is again said, ‘write to the Angel of the Church in Thyatira,’ although there was no Christian Church in Thyatira. *How then could he write to a Church which was not in existence?*”

To the foregoing point, indicative at least of some difficulty attaching to the common notion about these epistles, it may be worth while to add, for the sake of the reflecting reader, that it is said, many of the most learned of the Fathers

protested against the reception of the Apocalypse because of copies of it not being forthcoming in those several Churches to which John was instructed to send them. Ch. i. 11. And, it appears this objection was generally disposed of by the reply that it was a *secret* book, which, from its sublime contents, was not to be deposited for public use in the churches, but that it was confided instead to the respective Bishops. Indeed all the controversies, ancient and modern, which have been agitated about this precious portion of God's word, have an aspect of interest to him who sees that the whole book relates to "THE DAY OF THE LORD"—a period yet future. This view serves as a master-key to solve them all—at least the *substratum of facts* on which they rest.

CHAPTER III.

SECTION FIRST.

Revelations iii. 1—6.

1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Ver. 1. *And unto the Angel of the Church in Sardis, write.* Sardis has been a celebrated city. But not in connexion with the things of God. There is no such mention made of it in the Acts of the Apostles, nor even by profane authors. The conviction is thus strengthened, that this Church, like the others with which it is associated, is to find its standing in *the day of the Lord*. Some of them, perhaps, will be established then for the first time, and the rest revived. Strictly taken, indeed, the platform of none of them can be found in the past, except as we see their rehearsal in the transition state of synagogues of believing Jews, before they ripened into comprehensive assemblies of Jews and Gentiles, both one in Christ.

These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.] In addressing the Church of Ephesus, the Lord speaks of himself as “he that holdeth,” or grasps, “the Seven Stars in his right hand.” This style, we saw, to be applicable to the circumstances of that Church, for it was

declining in love ; and it was thus graciously intimated, that the Lord might be relied on as their upholder, so that what was weak and failing, might be strengthened out of the resources of His Almighty power. Now, in regard to the Church of Sardis, the style is somewhat different : it is—“ He that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars.” The idea here conveyed is, not that he *grasps*, or holds them firmly, as in the former case, but that He has a *propriety* in them—that they are *His* inalienably ; and therefore, under a solemn responsibility to serve Him, and witness for Him. Such an address well suits, by way of reproof, the alleged condition of the Church of Sardis, for they have only “ a name to live, while yet they are dead ;” and, certainly, such hollowness of character is not congruous with their relation to the Lord as His Church.

The other part of the title, also, is equally applicable :—“ *He that hath the seven spirits of God.*” It signifies that He is the depository of all spiritual life and power ; that He possesses not only the Churches and their angels—His organized instruments of service ; but also, a complete efficiency of spiritual energy to distribute among them. Hence, we should remember, that, as we have not to do with the second Person of the Trinity in His *Godhead simply* ; but, rather, as *the Christ*, the God-man ; so it is also in regard

to the Holy Ghost. We have not to do with Him simply *as God*; but in that covenant relation, into which, like the Second Person, He has come to accomplish the Divine purpose of redemption. In that relation, He constitutes the great endowment of the Churches, in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church; and in streams of life is distributed, by Him, throughout His members. Thus, the Saviour is the second Adam—the quickening spirit, through whom all spiritual life and energy is derived. Let us attend to this; and, especially if our position be at all like that of the Church of Sardis,—if “the things which remain are ready to die.” For, here we learn is the fountain out of which we may all be replenished; here we may have life, and “have it more abundantly.” John x. 10. In the introductory scene of this book, we do not find the Lord represented in this special point of view, as having the seven spirits of God; but, to the same purport we have the seven spirits described as *before the throne*,—that throne, on which we shall see, as we advance, that Jesus is now seated. Thus, it is implied that the Spirit, in his seven-fold perfection of power, is the efficient agent of Christ, acting throughout the world.

The Lord continues:—

I know thy works.] Thus, as usual, asserting His Omniscient inspection; which assertion He

immediately vindicates by laying bare the real state of this Church:—

That thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.] “A name,” a reputation among men, is described here. It is not an evil thing in itself to have this attaching to us. It is well for the Christian to be appreciated in society, if for no other end, that his Master may be recognised through him;—it is well for his light to shine, and be apprehended, that men may be constrained to glorify his Father in heaven. Nor is this condemned here. The censure is, that they had *only* a name; for the sake of which, alas! the human heart is so prone to sacrifice its allegiance to God. It is a truth that we can never too vividly realize, that if there be a looking for reputation among men, as our end, it will inevitably interrupt our intercourse with God; yea, in this evil age, in which the saints’ lot is cast, to be well esteemed among men of the world is a sign that all is not right with us. For, Divine wisdom has declared that the world “*loves its own.*” John xv. 19. Therefore, we find, the Lord Jesus warning his disciples against it, and, in this remarkable language:—“Woe unto you when all men speak well of you.” Luke vi. 26. Indeed, if any one be intent upon getting praise from his fellows, he must be more or less disaffected to the truth of God, when put before him; for the reception of

the truth tends to render a man unpopular. A striking instance of this depraving influence of regard to popularity, we have, in the Pharisees of old. They were confounded by what they saw and heard; conviction often flashed on their consciences, in reference to the Lord Jesus; but why did they not *confess* Him? “*They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*” John xii. 43. Still, withal, they were the religious world of the day; just as is said of the Church of Sardis,—it had *a name* to live, but was dead—dead in His sight, who could search the heart, and who judged not after the appearance. Oh! it is easy to satisfy man in our service, as it is easy to deceive him: but not so the Lord. In the relation in which He stands to His saints, He is as jealous of, as able to detect, divided affection.

But the Lord goes on to exhort this Church:—

Ver. 2. *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.*] Throughout the Scriptures, *watchfulness* is continually enforced in connexion with the Lord’s coming. And so here; for, observe what the Lord says, in the next verse:—“*Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard; and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I WILL COME ON THEE AS A THIEF, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*” It is not enjoined on them, let us observe, to watch *for*

death, notwithstanding all that men say about its practical tendency; but *for the Lord's coming*. Indeed, no where in Scripture is the subject of death thus appealed to by the Spirit; and, yet, how often do we hear, even from the lips of good men, such sentiments as the following:— ‘At all events, whatever be the literal interpretation of the phrase, “the coming of the Lord,” to us, the hour of our death is equivalent!’ Which is, just as if one hearing the account of the Creation read from the 1st chapter of Genesis, would interrupt the recital, by saying, ‘That is of no importance to *me*; the heavens and the earth, as far as I am concerned, were created when I was born; you may, therefore, substitute for the words—“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”—that, in the beginning, I was born!’ Such transmutation would only be analogous to that which prevails among Christians now, making their decease practically the same as the second coming of the Lord Jesus. And can we not at once detect the gross selfishness which attaches to such a mode of thinking? If we overheard any party, as in the case supposed, confounding the creation of the world with his birth, should we not exclaim against him:— ‘What! do you think of nothing but yourself; do you care nothing about God’s dealings with past generations, or even the vindication of His

own glory? And yet, where lies the difference between this, and confounding our individual decease with that great event, the Lord's coming, which is pregnant with such vast issues to all past and future generations; and which, too, is so intimately connected with the consummation of the Divine purpose? Alas, for the character of Christianity in the nineteenth century! Is this the sympathy we have with our God; and the interest we feel for our fellow-creatures, that our solitary introduction to and exit from the world is to constitute the horizon of all our hopes and fears? Surely the thought is a libel upon true religion; and only worthy of the man who is not ashamed to say that he thinks of no one but himself.

But, again, when we connect with the charge to watch for the Lord's coming—the exhortation, to “*strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die*”—what a beautiful consistency is stamped upon this epistle; for, the hope of the Lord's coming is to the saint, what the spring is to the earth. To the influence of the spring, with all its quickening, vivifying processes, do we owe, under God, the pleasing variety of earth's fruits and flowers; and, on the great hope of the Lord's coming, for which we are enjoined to wait and watch, depends the energy and patience of his children in doing and suffering his blessed will.

And, therefore degeneracy, touching the former, has been, and always will be, accompanied by declension in the latter.* Thus, the exhortation, to “be watchful,” is quite congruous with “strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.” Next follows the reason for this double exhortation:—

For I have not found thy works perfect before God.] Perfect,—or *filled*, as it is literally, is the term we would apply to defective ears of corn. The works of the Church of Sardis are thus faulty; at least, before God. They are sufficient, it may be, with man; they pass current, in human estimation; but they are not so with God. In such works there will, doubtless, be prayer, but no holy desire; activity, and bustling zeal, but no fire of love;—utilitarian philanthropy, but no sympathy with God;—attendance on ordinances, but no fellowship with Him who appointed them. Thus, their works will not be perfect, or filled out, before God. Hereupon the exhortation is resumed.

Ver. 3. *Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard; and hold fast, and repent.]* This language obviously refers to the remarkable manner in which the Church of Sardis will have been brought to know Jesus. And, from the 12th chapter of this Book, where we have pour-

* See Luke xii. 45.

trayed to us the inveterate malice of Satan against the Jewish nation at large, we may conceive what an interposition of Divine grace will be necessary in order to the gathering out and preserving of all these Churches in Asia Minor—"the remnant," as they are called, "of the woman's seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ,"—against whom the Dragon goes to make war. Ver. 17.

In the 14th chapter, also, we read of an angel flying "in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth," the same, I take it, as the "gospel of the kingdom," to which the Lord refers, when he says, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations;" Matt. xxiv. 14. Then, it appears, will be a time of fearful trouble; but, "he that endureth to the end shall be saved;" and this assurance will be one characteristic of the glad tidings, to meet that crisis—proclaimed, also, in a miraculous manner. Under such circumstances as these, it may be, the Church of Sardis will have received the truth, and hence the suitable admonition:—"Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." This is followed by a threatening:—

If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what

hour I will come upon thee.] As already observed, this confirms our view, that the watching previously enjoined has to do with the Lord's personal coming. In connection with this, let us refer a little further on in this book, to the 16th chapter:—"And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the Seven Angels, go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth, and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. And the Second Angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea. And the Third Angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and just are thy judgments. And the Fourth Angel poured out his vial upon the sun, and power was given unto him to scorch with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the

name of God, which hath power over these plagues; and they repented not, to give him glory. And the Fifth Angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains, and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. And the Sixth Angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet; for they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty;” v. 14. Now, let us beware of dismissing these tremendous things from our minds, as if they were only figurative statements. Let us remember that to help out, as it were, our conception of their literal fulfilment, we have recorded, for our instruction, the history of the plagues of Egypt—literal judgments, as all admit. At the time contemplated, a second Pharaoh, or, rather, the Antitype of Pharaoh, will be on the stage, in the person of the Beast,—the Antichrist of the last days, whose mark many will receive;

and those are among the judgments that will overtake such—notwithstanding which, however, (and it is an awful consideration) they will not give God glory, by confessing and humbling themselves before Him. To this hardening result, doubtless, will serve the lying wonders wrought by Satan's agency. In this literal interpretation no exception need be made in regard to the drying up of the Euphrates, commonly taken to import the waning of the Turkish Empire; for, surely, the phenomenon in question may as easily affect the literal river Euphrates, as it formerly did the Red Sea. Indeed, we are distinctly apprized, that at the Second Exodus of Israel, God will “shew unto them marvellous things, *according to the days of their coming out of the land of Egypt.*” Micah vii. 15.

But, now, let us see what follows this portentous recital. The Lord Jesus interposes with this oracular utterance:—“Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame;” v. 15. This refers not, in the way of strict interpretation, it is submitted, to the Saints under this dispensation; for, says the Apostle, “ye brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief,” 1 Thess. v. 4; and if not overtaken by *that day*—THE DAY OF THE LORD, which ushers in the judgments of this book, so neither

by that consummation which follows—the personal coming of the Lord with all His saints. In fact, like Lot delivered out of Sodom,* the saints of this dispensation, as already observed, will be caught up to meet their Lord in the air, ere ever that awful period—“the day of the Lord,” sets in; and hidden with Him in His pavilion in the Heavens—as Israel of old shut up within the recesses of Mount Sinai, they will be in the enjoyment of an intercourse with their Glorious Head, of which the world will be altogether unconscious.

But—if not the saints of this dispensation—who are the parties addressed here? I believe they are the Seven Churches contemplated in these epistles before us—special witnesses, as they will be, raised up by God, to glorify him in the latter day, after the present Church’s removal from the earth; and, doubtless, as we advance in this book, if subject to the Spirit of God, the Great Teacher, we shall get more light to confirm us in making this dispensational distinction. Of course, however, there is an *application* to the Church now, of both these admonitions, and a very important one,—

* This typical event is used here only by way of illustrative application; for it properly belongs, as our Lord’s employment of it intimates, to the future rescue of a Jewish remnant out of Jerusalem, when beleaguered by the armies of the Antichrist. Luke xvii. 32.

shewing us that we, also, should watch for the Lord's coming, in respect to ourselves. Indeed, "*the Grace of God*" teaches us this, as much as the practice of godliness. Titus ii. 11—13.

St. Paul, who was used of God to introduce the Gospel amongst the Thessalonians, spent, it appears, but three weeks in their city; and yet they were taught by him, not only to turn to God from idols, but to wait for His Son from heaven. Compare Acts xvii. 2, with 1 Thess. i. 10. *Waiting* for the Lord Jesus, then—not merely loving His appearing,—is a feature of character belonging to the true Christian.* By no means, therefore, on account of their future aspect towards the seven Churches, are we to lose sight of the warnings in this book, in their present bearing on ourselves. On the contrary, we must remember that the hope of the Church of this dispensation is suspended *solely* on the event of the Lord's coming—i. e., His coming *for them* into the air; contra-distinguished from His coming *with them* afterwards in the clouds of heaven. In Thes. v., we may see how the Apostle emphatically inculcates this:—"But of the times and the seasons,

* "Rhoda loved the appearing of Peter, but she did not expect him, therefore she opened not the gate for gladness, (Acts xii. 14); but 'the people gladly received Christ, *for they were waiting for Him*.'" Luke viii. 40.—*The Finished Mystery*, by the Duke of Manchester.

brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.” (i. e., no need *for themselves*; relatively to the prospects of *others*, indeed—for example, the Jewish nation, and the Gentiles connected with them, calculation of “the times and the seasons,” has its use; but the Church of God under this dispensation,—touching its own hope, which may be realized at any moment—is altogether relieved from such.) “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake *you* as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober, for they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night.” ver. 1—7.

With such affecting appeals as these sounding in our ears, it is an awful thing to sleep at our post; to be unwatchful, unsober. To meet a drunken man *at night*, is bad enough, but to encounter such a spectacle *in the open day*, is acknowledged, on all sides, to argue the lowest stage of degradation. Let us not, then, in the

light of that glorious day which is now shining on us through this Word, walk thus unworthily, nor trifle with such a thrilling theme. Tremendous responsibility attaches to it!

But, exclusive censure is foreign to a loving heart, especially when there is any thing to commend. Hence, we find, that Jesus now turns to some commendatory matter.

Ver. 4. *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.*] This idea occurs elsewhere. In the 1st Chapter of James, and the 26th verse, we read:—"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this,—(let us remember here, by the way, that, in the Church of Sardis, their works were "not perfect before God,")—to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself *unspotted* from the world." The "garment" is evidently implied here, for it is that which is subject to the *spotting* spoken of. And if we look at the inscription of this epistle,—“To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,” ver. 1, we perceive that they are evidently Jews who are contemplated here, as in the case of the Seven Churches. The same inference may be drawn from the first two verses of the second chapter, as has been

already noticed.* Thus, we may gather that the instruction given in this epistle, as in those to the Seven Churches, will find its application at the same period, in the latter days. Perhaps, too, the same time is contemplated in Jude. We there read:—"I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them which believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of *dignities*."† ver. 5—8. This is a description of the characters that will figure in those days. Then, the apostle proceeds in the 20th verse:—"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life. And of some

* Page 102.

† Perhaps, the glories of Messiah's kingdom; apostates will, of course, affect to despise these.

have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the *garment spotted by the flesh.*” Is not the same defilement here spoken of, as in the case of the Church of Sardis; and the same caution inculcated? Every species of abomination is mentioned as prevalent amongst the mass, while the Lord takes cognizance of the little remnant who will keep their garments unspotted. To such, then, the encouraging promise is now added:—

They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.] In the 19th chapter, we find this promise fulfilled; for we there read of the armies that are in heaven following the Lord Jesus, on white horses, “clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” Ver. 14.

The promise which formally crowns this epistle, to which we now come, is to the same effect:—

Ver. 5. *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.*] Being “*clothed in white raiment,*” we may understand to be equivalent to having resplendent glory put upon them; for, when the Lord Jesus was transfigured, His raiment, we read, “was white and glistening,” Luke ix. 29; and we know his saints will be conformed to Him, in His glory.

And I will not blot his name out of the book of life.] It is said that every Jewish family of old kept a register, and when any member suffered

death for breach of the law, the name of such was wont to be blotted out, as not to be numbered with that of the *just*, in resurrection; see Dan. xii. 1. Perhaps from this custom the reference here is taken. To the negative assurance, however, on this point, is attached the positive one:—

I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”] Thus we read in the Gospel:—“Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God;” Luke xii. 8. In the context of this passage, we find confessing the Lord opposed to being influenced by man’s fear. The whole passage has been already noticed.* It will suffice to observe now that it was in the contemplation of such, that the disciples were encouraged to witness for their Lord before men; and we find similar encouragement here held out to the Church of Sardis. And, in the present day, when fear of man,—public opinion,—is operating to such an extent, how cheering to observe that the Lord thus takes cognizance of a faithful confession of Him! And, in order that the Church, at all times, may give heed to this, it is well added:—

Ver. 6. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*] Indeed, all we read in this epistle is a portion to us, relating, as it does, to a professing Church, composed

* See page 113.

mainly of nominal believers. Alas! how many such there are now! Let us beware, then, of setting up, as our standard of judgment, the walk of others. Let us not look at each other, so much as at Jesus, the perfect model and prototype of the life of faith. Let His life be our study; and then, as reflectors of Him, we shall all be profitable to each other. But let us scrupulously beware of setting up any standard short of Him, our great Head. Many hear the truth, and shut their ears to the alarm it rings against their degeneracy of walk, because they look at one and another of their religious acquaintances, and are satisfied at being like them. Thus, they slide on in a downward course of conformity to evil, of which they should be the reprovers. Let us beware of this—the opiate influence of that degenerate Christianity which prevails now. We read, in the Old Testament, of the encouragement which idolatry thus received, or it may be, will receive in the latter day—the manufacturers of idols, looking at each other, while proceeding with their forbidden work:—“They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smoothed with the hammer, him that smote the anvil, saying, it is ready for the soldering;” Isaiah xli. 6, 7. It is thus that many professing, aye, evangelical

Christians are rocking themselves to sleep amidst the clamours of an awakened conscience, which tells them that all is not right with them. Let us take a lesson, then, from this reflection, and consider “*Him with whom we have to do.*” He walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; and, if we are in a state of declension, let us remember, we are not straitened in Him, but in ourselves—“*He hath the seven Spirits of God.*” Let us draw *life* from Him, by the exercise of faith, and resemble those whom He contemplates as *overcomers*. We have not to conflict, it is true, with the personal violence and persecution, which, doubtless, will fall to the lot of those specifically addressed, by this title, in these epistles; but, still, it is an evil age in which we live; and the all-pervading spirit of it is deference to *public opinion*. And—need it be added, that there are many who would face the cannon’s mouth more readily than stand before the lowering aspect of this insidious foe? Let us cease from man, and put our trust in God alone. He watches the sparrows, as they fall; and says to us—“Fear ye not *therefore.*” Luke xii. 5—7.

CHAPTER III.

SECTION SECOND.

Revelations iii. 7—13.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write ; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth : and shutteth, and no man openeth ;

8 I know thy works : behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it ; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie ; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God : and *I will write upon him* my new name.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

It is a solemn thing to be engaged in expounding the Word of God, for this reason, amongst others, that if we fail in understanding it rightly, we, so far, lack communion with our God. The Author desires, accordingly, to realize the respon-

sibility which rests on him in prosecuting the present work; wherein, he is aware that the views set forth by him are different from those propounded by many good men, and received by the Church in general. At the same time, he cannot but add, that one reason for the existence of such contradictory views is this,—the Church has shut her eyes to the fact of there being an interval between the completion of this dispensation,—in which God is doing a new thing,—gathering out from among his creatures His elect church, to be invested with special glory,—and the actual advent of Christ, to judge and govern the world in righteousness.

When the attention of God's children was lately arrested to the study of the prophetic Scriptures, the grand topic of the Lord's pre-millennial advent almost exclusively occupied their minds; and, in dwelling on this blessed, recovered, truth, they did not go on, as they ought, to discriminate between the different events connected with it. They were contented to discover the great centre, without distinguishing the order of the glories radiating from it; and this they are disposed to do still.

These remarks have been suggested by this epistle to the Church of Philadelphia, which now comes to be considered. The Author is more confirmed, as he proceeds, in the view that these

Signature

seven churches, seen as they were by John, in “*the Lord’s day*,” or “*day of the Lord*,” relate to the future. He trusts that he is willing to unlearn, if his views are wrong on this subject ; and, in such a case, he would not hesitate to avow his altered convictions. But, on the contrary—and he feels it due to his readers to state the fact—he finds his position the more tenable as he advances ; and especially, that the import of the term “*the Lord’s day*,” for which he contends, is the right clue wherewith to prosecute the interpretation of this book. He therefore resumes it in the present Epistle.

We have seen that the style assumed by our blessed Lord, in addressing the preceding Churches, was altogether or mainly taken from the particulars of the vision in which He was presented to John, and which is recorded in the 1st chapter ; the distribution being manifestly made throughout the Epistles with a view to the precise circumstances of each Church. But a peculiarity obtains in the Epistle now before us, in that the style assumed by the Lord is *not at all* taken from the foregoing vision that John saw, but from the Old Testament :—

Ver. 7. *And to the Angel of the Church in Philadelphia write : These things saith he that is holy, he that is true.*] These two attributes thus

coming together, would seem to give notice that the Lord designs to commend especially, to this Church, His faithfulness in performing His promises. To this end we find them appealed to in the Old Testament, in reference to the throne of David. Thus, in the 89th Psalm, and 28th verse, we read:—"My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my *covenant shall stand fast* with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven." Then, at the 35th verse:—"Once have I sworn by my *holiness*, that I will not lie unto David." Thus, these attributes of God,—holiness and truth—are associated with the maintenance of the throne of David. In like manner, in the 55th of Isaiah, where Jehovah calls upon every one that thirsteth to "come to the waters, yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," He adds at the conclusion;—"I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." ver. 1—3. They are "sure mercies," because God's holiness and truth are pledged for their bestowment in due time; and that, through the resurrection of Jesus,—the rightful heir to David's Royalties. Looking at it in this point of view, we perceive, also, that this style assumed by our Lord—"he that is holy, he that is true," leads, naturally, to what follows:—

He that hath the key of David, he that openeth,

and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth.] “*The key of David*”—The allusion, here, is almost entirely taken from the 22nd chap. of Isaiah, where Shebna, treasurer to king Hezekiah, is addressed in terms of indignation by the Lord; and is threatened with deprivation of his office; Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah, being preferred into it:—“And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah: And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.” ver. 20—22. Here the promises to Eliakim are, that he shall be put into the place of Shebna, and that he shall be prime minister of David’s house, the administrator of all its dignities and preferments. The Lord’s appropriation to himself of the insignia of Eliakim’s situation, is equivalent to His presenting Himself here as the undoubted King of Israel; in which character, be it remembered, He was born,—acknowledged by the wise men in Bethlehem,—proclaimed at His formal entry into Jerusalem,—and designated even when He hung upon the cross; for such was the inscription over His head:—“This is Jesus, the

King of the Jews.” Accordingly, if we suppose a little remnant of Jews, in the latter days, in Philadelphia, brought to know the Lord Jesus, and possess this testimony of Him—the book of the Revelation, whilst surrounded by persecuting and apostate brethren, throwing contempt on the promises of David ; we can imagine what adaptation to their circumstances of trial, and what encouragement, such a band of faithful ones will find in these words, significant as they are of the Lord’s determination to install the faithful remnant into the dignities of the house of David. With this supply of light from the *title*, we may proceed to the consideration of the contents of the Epistle.

Ver. 8. *I know thy works*, see page 71 and 101.

Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.] Taking this apart from the context, which speaks of the Lord having “the key of David,” the *open* door might be referred to opportunities of usefulness ; because Paul says, with reference to his preaching the Gospel in Troas,—“ a door was opened unto me of the Lord,” (2 Cor. ii. 12). But looking at it in connexion with the context, it seems imperative upon us to refer it to the administration of the preferments connected with the throne of David. Thus, we may collect, that the Epistle contemplates Jews—believing Jews, in the latter day ; the same parties, it may be, who

are addressed in the 55th of Isaiah, who, being invited to the enjoyment of the covenant blessings of David, under the figures of bread and water, milk and wine, (all the necessaries and refreshments of life) are, immediately after, exhorted without figure:—"Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." ver. 1—3. From references in the other Epistles, we have seen that they are *Jews* who are therein contemplated; and to such, the address here is most apposite, especially, from the character the Lord Jesus assumes in it; substantially assuring them, that, not all the malice of their enemies can debar them from the honors at His right hand, when He comes to take to Himself His great power, and reign. And, we can quite conceive, that in the terrible day in which the lot of these Churches will be cast—"the day of the Lord," the Jewish remnant in Philadelphia, who, amidst the persecution and mockery of apostate brethren, endeavouring to intimidate and delude them from allegiance to the commandment of their God, will have this testimony of Jesus in their possession, will hereby be not a little encouraged to steadfastness of faith. Surely, the echo of Jesu's words in their ears, through the medium of this blessed book, will be a blessed refreshment to them in their time of need.

A tender allusion to their almost exhausted condition comes next:—

For thou hast a little strength.] This is not said reproachfully, but as a sympathetic recognition of the extremity to which they are reduced, in which, they yet continue to conflict with the evil around them. Jesus feels, as it were, that, amidst much weakness, they are proving faithful to Him, and would thus express to them his consciousness of it.

And hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.] This implies the infidel character of the trials which these saints will have to encounter; for the word—“*kept*,” means retaining, or, holding fast the truth, amidst endeavours to subvert it. Hereupon, for further information, we may refer to the 14th chapter of this Book. At the 9th verse, we read:—“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast”—(this shews us the particular crisis which is contemplated—an awful period; the Beast and the False Prophet will be at work, and multitudes, Jews and Gentiles, succumbing to their influence, will receive the apostate mark)—“If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone

in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name;” ver. 9—11. Then, in the next verse, comes in the recognition of a band of faithful ones:—“Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” This corresponds, I submit, with the implication of the language here addressed to the Church at Philadelphia:—“Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” Indeed, the tenor of all these Epistles shows that the experience of persecution, thus imported, will be a general thing among the seven Churches.*

In the Old Testament Scriptures we find similar references to the endurance of the faithful remnant. For example, in the 25th chapter of Isaiah, and the 9th verse:—“And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Now, in the latter day, when the Antichrist is spreading himself abroad, and his adherents, trying to draw the faithful aside from the truth, we may well imagine these words as expressing the emotions

* See page 73.

of a remnant of believing Jews, waiting the Lord's appearance in their behalf; and how strikingly responsive are they to the language addressed to the Church in Philadelphia, especially the promise which follows in the next verse but one:—
 “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” But, more of this when we come to the place. Another promise intervenes:—

Ver. 9. *Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.*] To this there is a reference, I conceive, in the 66th of Isaiah:—
 “Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word;” ver. 1, 2. Here, are contemplated, the same things that belong to the time of the seven Churches. A considerable body of the Jews are in their land; but, unhumiliated and unbelieving, they proceed to occupy themselves in blind for-

mality, with the erection of their temple and their ancient ritual of devotion. All this, however, the Lord will not recognize; but, He will “look to *him* that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word.” The prophetic strain proceeds:—“He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog’s neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine’s blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol”—ver. 3. Thus, the very ordinances of God, which He himself instituted, are odious to Him, as ostentatiously observed by the mass of Jews at this period. And so he goes on to describe the character of the retribution that will ensue:—“Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear; but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delight not.” Thus, the mass of the Jewish people will prove offensive to God. But, with them, He contrasts another class:—“Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word,”—the same as those mentioned in the 2nd verse,—“Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified.” We see here, how the enmity of the Jewish people of that

day against the faithful remnant will be shewn, namely, by *casting them out*; just as, at our Lord's first advent, they cast out the blind man who confessed Him, and would not prevaricate. (See John ix). But, adds the Prophet, "He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed;" ver. 5, and compare Psalm l. 5. It is worthy of note, also, that a similar promise is given to the restored Jewish nation, with respect to their foes; see Isaiah lx. 14.

Now, recurring to the Epistle before us, what greater shame can these persecuting Jews at Philadelphia undergo, than by being brought to do homage to their defamed brethren; seeing them acknowledged by the Lord Jesus, at His coming, and put, by Him, into posts of honour and distinction, in connection with the ordering of David's throne? This seems to be the import of the threat before us. But these renegade Jews are called, by a very strong expression, not to be overlooked—"them of the synagogue of Satan"—reminding us of the similar language used by our Lord to the Jews of his day: "Ye are of your father the devil;" and intimating that that very type of character will be revived in the time of the seven Churches, when Jewish unbelief and apostacy will abound to as great an extent as ever. Moreover, these parties may be, specially, called "of the synagogue of

Satan," by reason of their being associated with him, as will doubtless be the case, in his manifestation in THE ANTICHRIST; and receiving the mark of the latter, without which he will not suffer men to buy or sell. (Rev. xiii. 17.)

Having thus far examined the circumstances which characterize the Church of Philadelphia, we perceive—1. They are faithful amidst temptation and apostacy. 2. They have to do with persecuting Jews. 3. An assurance is given to them, that these Jews shall be made to do them homage.

We now come to the further promise announced to them, that they shall be kept from what is, emphatically, called *the hour of temptation*.

Ver. 10. *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*] Here, touching this exemption from coming evil, we may turn to a few passages in the Old Testament, which seem to contemplate the same thing. Thus, in the 32nd Psalm, a godly remnant are spoken of as preserved from "*the floods of great waters.*" ver. 6. Again, in the 1st chap. of the prophet Zephaniah, we read:—"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord; the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble or distress, a day of wasteness and deso-

lation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land." ver. 14—18. Is not this description worthy of what we may conceive to constitute "*the hour of temptation?*"

But to proceed:—"Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation *not desired*." ver. 1. This word is somewhat obscure in its signification here. It probably means that the Lord feels no complacency in the Jewish people as now contemplated. He sees them, and *desires them not*. They are a vineyard that brings forth sour grapes—"the sour grape is now ripening in the flower." Isaiah xviii. 5. To the same effect, the LXX, the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, renders the word "not desired" by a Greek term which signifies, "*unchastened*," *i. e.*, not chastened to any effect. The Lord has, as it were, cultivated them, but they yield Him no return. This agrees

also with what is explicitly stated in the 3rd chap., as follows:—"Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God." These things may well cause her to be denominated *not desired, unchastened*. But to return to the 2nd chap. :—"Before the decree bring forth, before the day," (*i. e.*, the day of the Lord spoken of just before) "before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you. Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: *it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.*" ver. 1—3. Thus, in contemplation of the terrible judgment just spoken of as imminent, a little remnant of Jews, in the midst of their perverse and apostate brethren, is here encouraged; and what is said amounts to a promise that they *shall* be "hid in the day of the Lord's anger." We cannot interpret this of the Church—the elect of this dispensation, for they—except wrapped up and hidden in the person of the Messiah—do not find a place in the prophecies of the Old Testament, relating, as they do, to the Jewish nation, and to other nations only in connexion with them.* This promised

* See Apocalyptic Interpretation, page 31.—Nisbet & Co.

immunity from evil belongs, then, to a Jewish remnant in the latter day. The 27th Psalm refers to the same thing:—"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. *For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock.*" ver. 1—5. Now there can be no doubt, I think, that the Psalms, and this amongst the rest, give us, in the first place, the utterance of the Lord Jesus—that utterance which was prepared for him by the Spirit of God before His incarnation,—and that the feelings expressed in many of them were experienced by Him personally. In fact, they were His "*strong cryings*," in which, we are told, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that "He was heard in *that* He feared;" (Heb. v. 7.) and, accordingly, God "raised Him from the dead;" for what He deprecated, was, being left in the grave. But, this

Psalm, while referring to the Lord Jesus—through Him, as the Head, extends to the remnant of His faithful ones among the Jews in the latter day, of whom He was the prototype. So that we may consider them, in this Psalm, as responding to the promise given in Zephaniah.

There is another promise to the same effect, and referring, I think, to the same time, in Isaiah:—“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.” chap. xxvi. 20, 21. So far, then, looking at these few passages in the Old Testament Scriptures, the impression grows on the mind that there is a striking analogy between the circumstances of the remnant therein portrayed, and those of the Philadelphian Church.

But, further, let us look at the language by which the disastrous crisis is denominated, from which these saints are preserved:—“the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth.” Here is a remarkable preciseness of terms.

(1.) The hour of temptation is to come *on the world*. This word means the *habitable globe*; it

is the same word which is employed in the Epistle to the Hebrews :—“ Unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the *world to come*,” (Heb. ii. 5.) referring to the dominion celebrated in the 8th Psalm, which, we know, takes in not merely the earth, but the water and the air, connected with the earth. The whole globe, in fact, shall at the time here contemplated, be affected by disaster ; as is intimated, also, by the Lord, in the 24th of Matthew, when he speaks of the time of unprecedented tribulation—of “ the sun being darkened, and the moon not giving her light.” ver. 29. With still more awful details, we read in the 24th of Isaiah, of commotion throughout every department of creation, when the Lord ariseth to shake terribly the earth. See ver. 19, 20.

(2) It is declared that all this shall come on the world, the whole habitable globe, “ to try them that dwell *upon the earth* ;” for, in regard to what the earth yields of comfort to man, it is dependant, in a great degree, upon the air, indeed, upon all the elements around it. Thus, the whole planet and its dependencies shall be smitten by God, to try them that dwell on the earth ; to recompense “ indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of men that doeth evil.” Rom. ii. 8, 9. Moreover, the “ deceivableness of unrighteousness ” will be then let loose, to the allurement of the multitude into the worshipping the Anti-

christ, and the reception of his mark ; constituting the most fearful “*hour*,” as it may well be called, in that day of judgment. And when this “WICKED ONE” emerges from the horizon, endowed with all the gifts with which Satan can invest him ; splendidly imposing in his appearance, as Lucifer, son of the morning ; esteemed by men as the full development of the species—the harbinger of all good ; with despotic power enforcing the execution of all his behests, and plying every apparatus of mischief to ensnare the unwary—in that dreadful period, of which the day of temptation in the wilderness was a type, we may imagine what a distinction is held out to this Church in the immunity promised to it from evil.

The Author was accustomed to regard this immunity as a pledge of the translation from the earth of the saints of this dispensation, prior to the reign of the Antichrist. But the recognition of the distinction as already made in this exposition, between the standing of the seven Churches, in the day of the Lord, and the elect now gathering who will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air *before that day*, has led to a correction of his mistake ; and now, in the light of our Lord’s language, in the 17th chap. of John, where he uses the same form of words, praying for his disciples—“ I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest

keep them from the evil," v. 15, the Author clearly sees that the "*keeping*" in question, "from the hour of temptation," is simply a *moral* keeping, a keeping from the strokes of wrath which will then fall upon the earth, and the contamination of the great apostacy, in contrast with *a taking out of the world*, which the translation of the present Church imports.

But, now, wherefore this preservation of the faithful in Philadelphia? "Because," says our Lord, "thou hast kept the *word of my patience*," *i. e.* the word relating to His coming, which tends to inspire patience; and accordingly the asseveration of this immediately follows:—

Ver. 11. *Behold, I come quickly.*] This was spoken, let us remember, eighteen hundred years ago; and, yet, the Lord has *not* come. It is well to observe this; because, from the circumstance of the contents of this book being characterized in the 1st chapter, as things *shortly to come to pass*, it is argued that they must have come to pass long since. Now, here is an answer to such argument. The Lord, in reference to his own advent in glory, which all admit has not yet taken place, says,—"*Behold, I come quickly.*" The simple truth is, that the Lord's coming has been suspended over the Church, from the beginning, to make them watchful, in every generation; and, as these latter-day events are associated with His

coming, the same relation of time is assigned to both. But, more particularly, touching the connection of this note of warning with the Epistle before us, we must remember that the time in which all the visions of this book are laid, is *the day of the Lord*, in which He may be said to actually stand at the door. So that His coming, of which He here advertises the Philadelphians, reckoning from that period, will be, *quickly*—in the strictest sense of the word.

Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.] This animating challenge seems to call up before us the picture of the faithful soldier, in the deadly strife of combat, with the colours wrapped round his person, maintaining the trust committed to him. We can conceive, in such a case, his commander's words ringing in his ears, 'Hold fast, for I am coming.' Thus, we may regard the Lord's address to His faithful servants here.

We now come to the close of this Epistle, which, as usual, finishes with a formal promise :—

Ver. 12. *Him that overcometh.]* See page 93. In addition to which general remarks, be it now observed, that under this designation seem contemplated those who actually suffer martyrdom. Exhortation to constancy in the conflict with the Antichrist and Babylon, is the purport of the foregoing part of these Epistles, and this is

enforced by the assurance of the Lord's speedily coming to the rescue. But, as death will ensue in many cases before this happy consummation, therefore a special note of encouragement is here appended, to cheer the spirits of the martyred band.

Will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.]

In regard to the new Jerusalem, it is observable, John says, he "saw a temple therein;" but, he adds, as the reason of this, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it;" (Rev. xxi. 22.) In like manner, he says, "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof;" ver. 23. As God himself then, in Christ, constitutes the light, so He does the temple of the new Jerusalem. Accordingly, to be a pillar in the temple of God, may signify incorporation in the glory of the Heavenly city. But, perhaps, this is too vague an interpretation to adopt; let us, therefore, direct our thoughts to the earthly Jerusalem, the place for the soles of our Lord's feet—His footstool. Therein, we know there will be a temple; its construction and dimensions are accurately described by the Prophet Ezekiel. May not surveillance then over its reconstituted worship, upholding and superintending it, be one sphere of blessed occupation entailed on risen Jewish saints? And may not this be the import of being

made a pillar in the temple of God? Certainly it harmonizes with the beginning of the Epistle—its inscription, which, as we have seen, relates to the administration of the dignities of the House of David.

The promise goes on :—

And he shall go no more out.] He shall not be, as the servants of men, who are liable to dismissal from their employment ; like our political officers, for example, going out of office with every Administration, but the Lord's confidential servant in perpetuity, secure for ever in his post of honour.

And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.] The Philadelphian victor is thus assured of identification with the highest sphere of God's manifestation and government. He will be, by designation, part of God's executive—representing Him, and having God's name, and the name of the city which He hath built, named upon him. The fact of such a promise being given to this remnant, argues the state of their minds to be one of congeniality and sympathy with God. For, it would be no encouragement of hope to any individual to be assured of association and union of interests with one in whose character and pursuits he felt no lively concern ; but, on the

other hand, he who cherishes such prospect, gives no doubtful evidence that his affections are bound up with the party concerned.

This, too, may be applied to the Church of God, under this dispensation ; for, the same Spirit ought to be ours—longing for the glory of our God, renouncing self, or, rather, finding our true selves in Him. The Lord's glorious counsels, also, it is for us to cherish and hold fast, now that they are disparaged by so many who profess His name. And, here, let Mary of old be our example. She sat at the feet of Jesus, and, in common with His other disciples, heard His word, that word, doubtless, which revealed His coming sufferings and death. But, she firmly believed it also, which they failed to do—witness her anointing her beloved Master for His burial ; with which act of sympathy, also, the Lord Jesus was so regaled, that, wheresoever the Gospel was to be preached, throughout the whole world, He pronounced that what she had done “ should be told for a memorial of her.” Matt. xxvi. 6—13. Now, this spirit of Mary—holding fast the word of Jesus, which He now speaks to us concerning His coming glory, not letting it slip, amidst the degeneracy of the professing Church—should be ours ; and though there may be but little strength in encountering the opposing traditions and prejudices of men ; though there may be often a faintness of heart in

maintaining precious truth, against the obloquy it meets with, even in the house of its friends; yet, we may be assured, the Lord takes notice of us, as He did of Mary—and will again, of the Philadelphian remnant, like her; and he who exercises the little strength he has, will have more imparted to him. “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.” Hos. vi. 3.

Christian Reader! if, in this coming glory of our Great Head, we realize what our interest is, how diligently shall we give warning, and bear testimony of the saving truth of God to all around us! If, on the other hand, we realize not the fact and greatness of our own redemption, how obvious the cause of our little zeal in Missionary work! May it, then, be our aim, first, to assure ourselves that we are sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb,—that we are safe within the refuge; and then to exercise ourselves in labours of love, and, in patience of hope, as we contemplate the destroying Angel soon to pass through an apostate earth.

Surely this practical maintenance of the word of the Lord’s patience especially becomes us, in reference to our own proper hope, as the Church of God,—even translation to be with Jesus ere the impending “hour of temptation” sets in; so that while others are dismayed,—“their hearts failing them for fear,”—we may be kept in perfect peace, our minds stayed on God.

Reader! may we thus be animated in the service of God. Let us remember what the Lord Jesus says:—"Behold, I come quickly." Let this watch-word continually sound in our ears.

And if, peradventure, the eye of one not yet saved in Jesus is cast over these pages, may he not lay them down without looking to that precious Saviour, and putting his trust in Him. Now, before the day of mercy closes, and the thunder-storm of judgment breaks over the world, the Gospel is being preached,—the ark lies open, that sinners may flee to its refuge.

When from Egypt's bondage of old, Israel was being gathered out, not even a hoof was to be left behind. So is the purpose of God now. Ere His saints are translated to glory, their number must be accomplished. Therefore He waits to be gracious; His long-suffering is unto salvation. The righteousness of God, without the law, even salvation by faith in Christ, is now being proclaimed—"unto all," such is its universal aspect—"and upon all them that believe," such is the only limit to its enjoyment. Rom. iii. 22.

Ver. 13. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*] See pages 84 and 178.

CHAPTER III.

SECTION THIRD.

Revelations iii. 14—22.

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write ; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God ;

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked :

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Ver. 14. *And unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write.*] In the allusions contained in this Epistle, unlike the Epistles to the other Churches, there seems nothing that admits not of

a general application to the Church in every age. No remarkable circumstances are mentioned, such as to arrest the mind of the reader to a special contemplation of the future. We might, therefore, be disposed, at first sight, to refer this Epistle to the Church at large. But since the principle we set out with (namely, that the Apostle saw these things *in the Lord's day*) has been already established, and that all these Epistles relate to different gatherings of Jewish disciples yet to be formed, we shall not have followed our clue aright, if we assign not to the present Epistle, like the others, a prophetic interpretation.

It may be well, also, for the reader here to remember, that whilst in the instructions of Paul to the Colossians, (Col, iv. 16) touching their communicating with "the Church of the Laodiceans" in the matter of the Epistles respectively addressed to them, we have evidence that there was a Christian Church at Laodicea in the Apostle's day, yet it is by no means plain that there was a Church there at the period when John wrote the Apocalypse. For in the 61st year of our Lord, which must have been immediately after Paul wrote, Laodicea, with its neighbouring cities, was overthrown by an earthquake; and the short interval which elapsed till the Apocalypse was written, taking any of the later dates assigned to it, can scarcely have admitted of the city's being

rebuilt and repeopled, to give the materials for another Church. Be this, however, as it may, the position here contended for, is not interfered with, namely, that this Epistle, like the preceding, relates not to the past but to the future, and to a constitution of Church of which we find no precedent, except in the organization of the Jewish synagogues.*

Before proceeding to the *inscription* of this Epistle, it may be well to premise that the titles therein assumed by the Lord Jesus, as in the case of the Philadelphian Epistle, are not, any of them, drawn from the vision which John saw, recorded in the first chapter.

One of the titles indeed here assumed, the middle one, is a reiteration of the style given to our Lord in the general inscription of the book to all the seven Churches:—"And from Jesus Christ, *the faithful witness.*" But, here there is annexed another term—"the faithful and *true* witness." This seems supplied from the vision, in the 19th chapter; where He that sat on the horse,—evidently the Lord Jesus,—is said to be called "*Faithful and True.*" ver. 11. The other titles do not occur, even elsewhere, in the book; unless, indeed, the title—"the beginning of the creation of God"—be substantially contained in the "*Alpha and Omega,*" which last expression

* See pp. 39, 40, 45—47.

we have met with once and again in the first chapter. Perhaps, the design of our Lord, by these repetitions and variations, is to provide for the clearer perception of this important truth, that, in every respect, He is the great revealer of God, in his works, and in his Word; and the recapitulation is the more appropriate here, since this Epistle is the closing one of the series. It is as if the Lord would crown all He had previously predicated of himself, by the emphatic announcement, in these words, of his being the very focus of Divine light, to which every eye should be directed, that would take cognizance of God. But, to come to the inscription:—

Ver. 14. *These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God.*] “*The Amen.*”—This is a Hebrew term of great emphasis. Besides its frequent use in the Gospels, by our blessed Lord, the Apostle Paul employs it in the first chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Accounting to that Church for his not visiting them, as he had purposed to do, he says:—“When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay?” He, thus, disclaims the idea of mere caprice influencing his movements, adding his protestation,—“But as

God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea, and nay, but in Him, was yea." ver. 18, 19. Thus, the Apostle's procedure was not characterized by "yea" and "nay," because the word he preached was not thus characterized; and that word he now proceeds to say derived all its stability from the Lord Jesus:—"For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." ver. 20. This is, indeed, a weighty statement: let us pause on it. When God created man, saying,—“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion.” (Gen. i. 26.) There was a promise involved. But, although Adam fell by transgression, God has not departed from his purpose; and, in Jesus, “the Seed of the woman,” shall it yet be accomplished. So, in regard to the promise to Abraham:—"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. xxii. 18.) This promise was not fulfilled in Isaac, nor in Jacob, nor in any of his mere fleshly descendants, but as its fulfilment was commenced, so it will be completed—in Christ. Again, in regard to the promise to David, that God would “set up his seed after him, and in him establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.” (2 Sam. vii. 12, 13.) Solomon did not

verify it, but it shall be verified in Christ. All the promises of God centre in Him, thus He is the “yea” and “Amen.”

We now come to the next title, “*the faithful and true Witness.*” We may gather something of its precise import from the first chapter, where it is connected with mighty power, being followed by the style—“Prince of the kings of the earth.”* But the expression occurs, as has been already observed, in another place, the 19th chapter, “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called *Faithful and True.*” ver. 11. Here are the very words of our Epistle; and, what is said in connection with these attributes of Christ deserves attention:—“In righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called, The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath

* See page 15.

on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." ver. 11—16. Now, from the association of the titles, "Faithful and True," with this description of our Lord's person, and avenging career, we cannot doubt but that they relate to His character, not simply as the revealer of God's *grace*, but *as the executor of God's threatened judgments*; and should we not account, that it is because the Lord would arouse to a sense of their exigency the sadly degenerate Church of Laodicea, which He last addresses, that, at the very outset, He exhibits himself to them in this aspect? Thus intimating to them, that He is "the Amen," not merely to confirm every promise of God's mercy, but to execute every threatening of God's holiness.

The last title is, "*the beginning of the creation of God.*" It is not said the *beginner* of the creation. We can easily understand how the Lord Jesus, being God, might be denominated thus. This, however, is not the truth stated here; but that He is the *beginning*; that is, the first of God's works. Now, how can this be affirmed of our Lord, since He is essentially God? It has already been observed, that the understanding of this proposition lies in the recognition of the fact, that the Second Person in the blessed Trinity—in the beginning, before ever the earth or the world was—came into the relation of

the Christ; in which relation, He was set up before God as the pregnant Archetype and Head of all creation, eventually to be manifested as Universal Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Into this assumed relation,—the Second Person having come, from everlasting, out of the incomprehensible, invisible glory that belonged to Him as God,—became the Christ of God; and, as such, being virtually invested with the creature nature, which He afterwards actually assumed, He opened the womb of creation—as we read in the Colossians—“*the first-born of every creature;*” “all things,” as the Apostle goes on to say, being created “in him,” and “by him,” and “for him,” (Col. i. 15, 16); just as a sculptor, in making a statue, can be conceived of, as first fashioning the head, and then proceeding to adjust to it all its other proportions. After this manner, Christ was set up from everlasting, before God, and all things were moulded, by the predestinating power of God, in relation to Him. Hence, he is called “*the beginning of the creation of God.*”*

One important lesson to be gathered from this, is, that no department of the creation of God is really understood where Christ is not known, for He is the *Head* of Creation. And, as we take cognizance of the person of a man, by

* See “Lectures on Prophecy,” pp. 39—45, by the Author.

surveying him downwards, from the head ; so, should we make acquaintance with the works of God, tracing their development from Christ, not only as the great artificer, but as the parent-mould. Thus, the most unlearned of God's children, with the Bible in his hand, stands on an eminence far above the most learned of the world, in regard to real intelligence concerning the works of God. The former sees that God has designed all in reference to Christ ; whereas, the latter, if he has not learned " the truth as it is in Jesus," is utterly *at fault* when he tries to account for anything. It is because, also, the saint knows this truth—CHRIST, " THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD"—that he dare not separate any knowledge from Christ. Whatever of instruction he communicates, be it only the elements of the alphabet, he will not think of severing it from Christ—sacrilegiously putting asunder what God has joined together ! Our statesmen, alas ! do not see this truth ; and, therefore, in their measures for national education, they are ready to dislocate knowledge from religion—in other words, from Christ. Be it our's, reader, as we have opportunity, to lift up our voice against this unhallowed project ; and let this radical truth—Christ, the beginning of the creation of God—be our grand argument.

We now pass on to the body of the Epistle :—

Ver. 15. *I know thy works.*] See pages 71 and 101.

That thou art neither cold nor hot ; I would thou wert cold or hot.] Here is censure, unmitigated censure. *Coldness*, may be taken to mean utter indifference, such as the party may be unconscious of; *hotness*, on the other hand, to refer to lively earnestness. Of course, this latter is what the Lord cares for. But the former is more tolerable to Him than that mediate lukewarmness, which just shews the heartless neglect to be self-perceived. Thus, we ourselves, if the alternative were offered us, would rather have to do with a man who was insensible to religion altogether, yea, who opposed it, than with one who, while professing to be alive to its importance, yet evinced no zeal in its behalf. Who, for example, would not prefer to have intercourse with a Papist or a Chartist, rather than with what is called a *liberal*—a man, who, under the guise of charity, but in reality apathy, is utterly regardless of *all distinctive religious truth*? Such a spirit, accordingly, is loathsome to God, and so it is here declared:—

Ver. 16. *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*] This is in allusion to the nausea and convulsive rejection which follows the drinking of lukewarm water. The language resembles that

which God used to the children of Israel of old, when enjoining upon them the observance of His commandments:—"Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out." Lev. xx. 22. This is the form of expression which is adopted by our Lord to convey His sense of abhorrence of the position of the Church in Laodicea.

But, now, regarding this Church as a Jewish gathering in the latter day—the day of the Lord, is there any analogous recital in the Old Testament, which we may consider as bearing upon the same circumstances? The enquiry may be answered by referring to the prophet Zechariah, the 11th chap. :—"Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen: because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down. There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not." ver. 1—5. Observe, here are prophets contemplated, shepherds utterly indif-

ferent to the work of God entrusted to them, and congratulating themselves that they are rich : upon which the Lord says : “ For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord : but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour’s hand, and into the hand of his king : and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves ; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands ; and I fed the flock.”—(*i. e.*, “ the flock of slaughter,” the little remnant despised by the shepherds.) “ Three shepherds also I cut off in one month ; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.” ver. 6—8. Here observe, besides these shepherds congratulating themselves that they were rich, which answers to what we see in the character of the Church in Laodicea ; and which, doubtless, is one reason for the disgust expressed by our Lord : we see another feature of resemblance, the Lord regards them with *loathing*. “ Then said I, I will not feed you : that that dieth, let it die ; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off ; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it assunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.”—(“ All the people,” excepting the remnant.) “ And it

was broken in that day : and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord. And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price ; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter : a goodly price that I was prised at of them.” This was the equivalent for an ox condemned to death. (See Exodus xxi. 32.) “And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brother-hood between Judah and Israel.” ver. 8—14. Thus, it appears that the apostacy among the Jews in the latter day, will be as aggravated as at the first advent of Christ, combining sordid covetousness with blood-guiltiness ; so, as it were, to constitute an approval of the act of their forefathers,—a sort of going over it again. And what I submit, is, that among those gathered out from the Jews in Laodicea, there will be the working and exhibition of the same evil spirit.

In the prophet Zephaniah, also, may be recognised another allusion to the same time. We read in the 1st chap. :—“Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God : for the day of the Lord is at hand : for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord’s sacrifice, that I will punish

the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel."—*i. e.*, adopting, it may be, the habits of libertines or slaves. "In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish-gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills. Howl, ye inhabitants of *Maktesh*, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off." "*Maktesh*," the lower part of Jerusalem where artisans lodged. "And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." ver. 7—12. "Settled on their lees," is very like lukewarmness. But how is it they entrench themselves in their security? The 13th verse implies the answer:—"Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof. The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of

wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.” Then we read at the 18th verse, “Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s wrath.” ver. 13—18. Now, from these allusions to the retributive character of the day of the Lord, we may gather that the Church in Laodicea, existing in that day, and addressed, as it is, by the Lord Jesus, will be contaminated with the evils denounced—disgusting self-complacency, and boasting in earthly riches. Whereupon the Lord threatens, in the contemplation of their false security,—“I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

But He not only uses the language of rebuke and alarm; He also appeals to any lingering susceptibility of counsel, which might be in them. And it is remarkable, He does this more tenderly than almost in any other of the Epistles to the Churches. Surely, this shows us how we should deal with those who may be in like circumstances; that, instead of leaving them in their incipient apostacy, we should ply them with more diligent earnestness, imitating the example of our blessed Lord:—

Ver. 17. *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and*

miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.] Here is the exposure of that “lifting up of heart” by reason of worldly abundance, which will characterize this Church. Their “inward thought” will be trusting in their wealth, and boasting themselves in the multitude of their riches; and that at a time when miseries are coming upon the whole earth. They will be like Gehazi of old, coveting their own aggrandizement, at the unseasonable moment of Israel’s oppression, when sympathy with God should be their sole resource. Compare 2 Kings v. 26, with Psalm xlix. 6, 11.

The earnest entreaty follows:—

Ver. 18. *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.*] “Gold,” that is, *the true riches*,—the trust which God has destined for the administration of His faithful servants; and which shall be purged from the evil now mingled with it: and “gold *tried in the fire*,” because the day of the Lord, which will put them into possession of these riches, will be “revealed by fire.” 1 Cor. iii. 13.

And white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.] Under this figure of apparel, distinction in the Lord’s kingdom seems to be alluded to. White raiment constituted some of the habits of service allotted to Aaron and his sons for their ministrations in the holy place. See Ex. xxviii. 42.

And anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.] Thus the Lord would have them to open their eyes and see what great things He had in store for His faithful ones; just as the Apostle prays for the Ephesians:—"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Eph. i. 15—18.

Intelligent perception of God's mind and ways, and communion with Him in them, is, as it were, "*the single eye*" which makes the whole body "*full of light.*" Mat. vi. 22. Especially, is hope of the future glory a powerful motive and stimulus to the activity of the believer. Hence, then, under the figure of anointing their eyes with eyesalve, the Church of Laodicea is counselled to take cognizance of their hope. And now, as if to account for the severe language the Lord had used toward them, and that they might not thereby be repelled from Him, He says:—

Ver. 19. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore, and repent.]* They

were not to suppose that He gave them up, although their declension had proceeded to such a deplorable extreme. Let them only repent, and become “hot,” instead of “lukewarm,” and all might yet be well.

To this He adds, as though waiting to be gracious, and watching for the first inclination of returning allegiance :—

Ver. 20. *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.*] This does not simply mean that the Lord Jesus knocks by His spirit at the door of their hearts, but that He is now, as it were, on the confines of the earth ready to be revealed. See James v. 9.

If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.] Thus, reconciliation with Him, even now at this signal of His coming, would be sure to be attended with admittance to the marriage feast. See Rev. xix. 9.

Lastly, as in all the Epistles, a promise closes the Lord’s address :—

Ver. 21. *To him that overcometh.*] See on ver. 12, page 225.

Will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.] Here is a marked distinction between the throne of the Father and the throne of Christ. Christ is set down on His Father’s throne, but not yet on His own, that is, I conceive, *the throne of*

David, (compare Luke ii. 32, with Acts ii. 30); involving at the same time, the dominion which appertains to Him as the second Adam. Compare Heb. ii. 5, &c., with Psalm viii.

On this throne, the Lord Jesus will be seated at His second advent. Not that He will then, strictly speaking, vacate the throne of the Father; but, whilst still identified with it, and so, wielding universal power, He will occupy David's throne, as the King of the Jews. The glory of this is that which is called *His own glory*, in which, together with that of the Father, He will be revealed at His coming. See Luke ix. 26. And during the interval which will then succeed, inclusive of the dispensation of the Millennium, will He exercise the absolute authority of God throughout all creation, subjugating all things, and harmonizing them with the Divine will. At the end of that period, He will yield up to the Father the absolute sovereignty of this universal empire, now reduced to its destined subordination; and take to Himself for ever the ostensible position of the Father's vicegerent, "that God may be all in all." See 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.

Now the promise here to His martyred servants in Laodicea is, that at His approaching coming they shall sit with Him on *His* throne as the King of the Jews. A vision of the actual fulfilment of this is presented to us in the 20th chap. of this

book. We read at the 4th verse,—“ And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them : and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands : and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” This last expression is not designed to limit the term of their reign with Christ to *a thousand years*, as though it were not to extend beyond that time ; but to specify the same as one distinguished period, in which they are to participate in the ordering of Messiah’s kingdom. To the honoured band here pourtrayed, I believe those belong who are addressed in this Epistle as victors.

Let us not, however, forget that to God’s saints, called under this dispensation, the glory appertains of reigning with Christ, *in the highest sense* ; for they are called “ the body of Christ, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all—*i. e.* without whom He would not be complete—the rib, as it were, taken out of the side of the second Adam, and converted into another self ; in conjunction with whom, as the mystic Eve, *the mother of all living*, He, *the Father of the ages to come*, will replenish with blessedness the universe of God. To *them* is allotted, I believe, participation in the glory of the throne whereon

the Lord now sits, in the highest heaven. And so, in the 4th chapter, we find them installed into their wondrous position, in the midst of that throne which is called “the throne of God and of the Lamb.”* Thus, also, we read, in the eighth of Romans, “*heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also *glorified together.*” ver. 17.

There are some, indeed, who say that Christ’s *present* possession of glory, at the Father’s right hand, is the fulfilment of His kingly reign, so often alluded to in the Scriptures. Such, however, is not the case. The Lord Jesus is now at the Father’s right hand,—*the exalted Head of the Church*,—and *all things are being directed by Him*, as the secret ordinance of God, with a view to the good of the Church; but, so far as his position of King is concerned, He is a rejected King; being rejected from reigning on the throne of David:—“We will not have this man to reign over us;” and, only when He comes again, will He be manifested and acknowledged in the royalty that belongs to Him.

Of course, also, until this time arrives, His saints will be ‘hidden ones,’ bearing His reproach. Is it because they are impatient of this, that so many Christians will have it that their Master reigns, despite of the plainest evidence to the

* See chapter xxii. 3.

contrary? Alas! it is too true that there are some who would reign without Christ! And so we hear them speak of ‘a spiritual coming,’ and ‘a spiritual reign.’ But with what cutting irony may we not regard such parties, as addressed by the Apostle:—“Now ye are full, now ye are rich, *ye have reigned as kings without us;*” while he dismisses the subject by adding, “I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.” (1 Cor. iv. 8.) This shews, also, *when* the Apostle himself expected to reign, even when His blessed Lord appeared—and that now he, and all who sleep in Jesus, are waiting for the same glorious consummation, when in their flesh they shall see God; (see Coloss. iii. 1—4). Here is the legitimate hope which binds together the whole Church—Jesus himself is intent on it, and so ought we. Nor let us forget that personal sympathy with Him is especially endearing to our Lord. This was no small element of comfort to Him when on earth; witness the conduct of Mary, as already remarked, who anointed Him for His burial; witness also the penitent homage of the dying thief, when, writhing on the cross, he reminded the broken-hearted, God-stricken victim, of the approaching power and glory of His kingdom. How immediate the reference, in both cases, which this chord of sympathy awoke! Reader! let us cultivate this. Let our religion be

more than a cold exercise of judgment ; let the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts ; and let us love Him in return. Let us be *zealously* affected in this good thing. The Apostle could say :—“ Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God ; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause ; *for the love of Christ constraineth us.*” 2 Cor. v. 13, 14.

Surely, that which lies at the root of cold formality among Christians is a defective realizing of *the Lord's living person and affections*. If, whilst saying we love Jesus, we were actually to realize what he has done and suffered for us, and promised to do, as the God-man, with a human heart and affections—our souls would be buoyant with emotion ; and, instead of mere orthodoxy of judgment, there would be an enthusiasm of attachment to Him who has redeemed us by His blood ; (see 1 Peter i. 8). We should thus know “ the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.”

Ver. 22. *He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.*] See pages 84 and 178.

CHAPTER IV.

Verses 1—11.

1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven; and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me: which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne.

3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

4 And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

6 And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7 And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle.

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Ver. 1. *After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven.*] That is, after John had seen the vision recorded in the first chapter, and received instructions for the seven Churches. Up to this time he had been in the Isle of Patmos, but now the scene is changed to heaven,—

And the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me : which said, Come up hither.] The interjection, “ behold,” should be carried on here from the former clause—it belongs to what John *heard* as well as to what he saw. The meaning is that the voice which he heard at first—the voice which is mentioned in the first chapter—now summons him up to heaven.

And I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.] In the scenes thus introduced, are fully expanded the latent germs involved in the vision of chapter 1 ; (see on chap. i. 19). The posteriority of the events, signified by “ *hereafter*,” is in relation to the point of time, in the day of the Lord, in which John saw the establishment of the seven Churches. “ Hereafter,” indeed, is too equivocal a rendering of the original ; for, at least, it admits of a long duration, intervening from the era of the seven Churches, whereas the word in the original,—the same which is translated “ after this,” in the first clause of the

verse,—denotes, for the most part, uninterrupted sequence.*

Now, if we recognize that the scene of these Churches is laid in the future, in “the day of the Lord,” we can quite appreciate this. John first sees these seven Churches in their organization, in the day of the Lord, and, after seeing them, he is caught up into heaven, and sees things which shall transpire afterwards, *i. e.* after the organization of the Churches. Thus is disposed of a serious difficulty, which has not a little embarrassed opposing classes of interpreters, so far as the subject has been discussed hitherto.

For example, some writers† having taken up the notion that the seven Churches were seen by John, eighteen hundred years ago, *as then existing*; and observing that this chapter introduces the symbols of the seals, &c., as *importing events immediately to follow*, have come to the conclusion that such events must have commenced running their course long since, in proof of which their readers have been satiated by endless citations from Roman history. Again, other writers, while agreeing with the former, that these Churches

* See Luke v. 27; x. 1; xvii. 8; xviii. 4; John iii. 22; v. 14; vii. 1; xiii. 7; xix. 38; xxi. 1; Acts vii. 7; xiii. 20; xviii. 1; Rev. ix. 12.

† Rev. E. B. Elliott, to wit.

had their contemplated existence in the Apostle's day, have, yet, on actual examination, been constrained to maintain that the visions which follow relate to the future. But, this, it must be admitted, is manifestly incongruous with the note of uninterrupted sequence which connects them with the seven Churches. And, of this fact, the advocates of the former system have not been slow to remind their opponents. From these conflicting positions, then, the truth is at once extricated; if, as already suggested, we regard the seven Churches, with the Epistles addressed to them, as finding their era in *the beginning* of "the day of the Lord," and the visions which now come to be introduced in Ch. iv., as rehearsals of what will happen *afterwards*, in the course of that eventful day. It is obvious, that the things thus indicated, cannot be subsequent to the passing away of the seven Churches; for their contemporaneous existence is implied throughout, and the several promises addressed to them lead up to the final consummation.*

Ver. 2. *And immediately I was in the Spirit.*] See on Ch. i. 10, p. 31.

And, behold, a throne was set in heaven.] This throne we cannot doubt to be that of the Father, whereon the Lord Jesus now sits, as affirmed in His promise to the Laodicean Church (ch. iii. 21).

* See page 57.

And, in keeping with this, is the description which follows, of the Father, as the Principal Personage upon the throne; and of the Lord Jesus, as the Lamb that had been slain,—still said, however, to be “in the midst of the throne,”—coming to Him for investiture with the earth’s actual dominion.

But, it is equally obvious, that whilst it is the Father’s throne, with Christ seated on it, which is here contemplated, it is in its *future* actings, when the Divine forbearance shall have come to an end, and the Lord “arise to shake terribly the earth.” (Isaiah ii. 19, 21.) *Now*, during *this* dispensation, suspended action belongs to this throne—Christ sits on it, at the Father’s right hand, until His enemies are made His footstool. A gracious process indeed is going on at present, whereby enemies are converted into friends. But the subjugation of enemies, as such, to be His footstool, is an event *expected, not transacting*. When the time for this event arrives, then will the Father give His commission to the Son, who, from the Father’s throne, in the Heavens, will begin the execution of the long threatened judgment, prosecuting it in successive strokes—till, at last, with his glorified saints of this dispensation, whose translation will have initiated the process, He will appear in the clouds of Heaven, and every eye shall see Him.

It is a mistake to suppose that the Son leaves the Father's throne, upon the proceeding forth of the judgments, which this Book rehearses ; rather, He becomes then *judicially* active, upon that throne, whereas He is now *expectant*. This harmonizes with the expression, "*the throne of God, and of the Lamb,*" which we meet with, once and again, in the course of the following visions, and with the circumstances of the Second Advent, as described elsewhere. For example: "Ye shall see the Son of Man *sitting on the right hand of power*, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Mark xiv. 62.) Again, "The Lord at thy *right hand* (*i. e.* Christ at the right hand of the Father) shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath." (Ps. cx. 5.) Thus, though the Lord Jesus, at the right hand of God, is *now* the Gracious Forbearing One; yet, from the same right hand—as the Father's ordinance, the Executor of His righteousness—will He, at the time here contemplated, act *in judgment*.

And one sat on the throne.] This is evidently a representation of the Father, but set forth by the attributes of the Incarnate Son. That visibility should be thus ascribed to the Person of the Father, as well as to that of the Son, may, at first sight, appear incongruous ; for, it is a great cardinal truth, of which we must never lose sight, that, *personally*, the Triune Jehovah has never been,

nor ever shall be, seen by His creatures, except in Christ; in whom “dwellleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” But, here, the double representation is employed, in order to accommodate to our conception, by *vision*, the important truth, that all the power, glory, and dominion centering in the Lord Jesus, and about to be exercised by Him, is possessed by Him as THE CHRIST—the delegated one from the Father. It is just as in Daniel, we have the Father, as the Ancient of Days, sitting on a throne, and then one like unto the Son of Man, is presented to Him, and receives from Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom. Dan. vii. 9, 13, 14.

If, indeed, it sufficed for this truth, to have it communicated by simple statement, it might be enough for us to read, as elsewhere, from the lips of our blessed Lord, that “all things were delivered unto Him, of the Father.” But in *vision*, which is the mode of Revelation employed here, we could not have it conveyed to us otherwise than by a double personation.

And, truly, it is a wondrous truth on which we should pause with devout adoration, that, from everlasting, the Eternal Son of God, the Second Person in the Trinity, came into the relation of the Christ, to receive trusts from the Father in order to the accomplishment of the Divine purpose. It will, perhaps, help our idea of this

great subject, if we imagine three individuals,—of equal rank, power, and dignity, the components of a great banking firm,—determining, by mutual consent, in order to the more effective execution of their business, that one, as the head of the bank, should be constantly referred to, but still not seen by any one,—that another should be its representative, in all personal interviews,—and that the third should be the executive agent, acting everywhere, in the name of the other two. By means of this relative subordination, thus assumed by the three equal parties, we can imagine the community to become practically acquainted with the composition of the firm.

Now, to compare greater things with less, this is something like what the Word of God reveals, touching the glorious manifestation of Jehovah to His creatures. That God might be seen and known, the Eternal Son entered, from everlasting, into the relation of THE CHRIST, taking to himself, by predestination, a creature nature; in which, in the fulness of time, He should be actually manifested. The Holy Ghost, also, entered into a similar covenant relation, undertaking to be the *Communicator* of God to the creature, even as the Son to be the *Revealer*. As has been concisely said, “Godhead, in its incomprehensibility, standeth in the person of the Father; in its comprehensibility, in the person of the Son; and, in

its communicableness, in the person of the Holy Ghost. All that can be felt of God is in the Holy Ghost; all that can be known of God, is in the Son; and all that is of God, is in the Father.”*

Doubtless, there is something in the *essential* relations appertaining to the Persons of the Godhead, which gives a propriety to the order of *the assumed* relations; and, because the Triune Jehovah is *what He is*, therefore has issued forth all that redemption discloses.

Ver. 3. *And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper.*] The property of a jasper stone, on account of which it is introduced here, seems to be *clearness*. For, in the 21st chapter of this book, where it is used as a comparison for the light of the New Jerusalem, we read;—“like a jasper stone clear as crystal.” ver. 11.

And a sardine stone.] A sardine stone is considered by all to be a stone of a blood red colour. Combining, then, the similitude of the sardine stone with that of the jasper, the idea presented to us is that of glorified humanity, ruddy and transparent, just as in the person of the Lord Jesus, it shone for a moment on Mount Tabor, when he was transfigured; as, also, we can conceive it now to be, at the right hand of God; and, as it will be beheld when He comes again. Thus,

* Irving.

in accommodating to our minds a visible representation of the Father, the Spirit employs the attributes of the Incarnate Son. And from no other source can we frame a right conception of the perfections of the glorious God.

And there was a rainbow round about the throne.]

This is not insignificant ; for, let us remember what follows the display of this throne—even such heavy visitations, under the opening of the Seven Seals, as might naturally suggest fears for the preservation of the earth, as an organized structure for the habitation of God's creatures. But, here is a sight which dissipates all fears—round about the throne is seen “a rainbow,” the very token which God gave to Noah, to assure him that the earth should be destroyed no more. We read, in the 9th chapter of Genesis,—“And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you ; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you ; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you ; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood ; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and

every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations : *I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.* And it shall come to pass, *when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud : And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh ;* and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. *And the bow shall be in the cloud ; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.* And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.”

ver. 8—17. When, therefore, we see the import attached to the bow by God himself, and that it surrounds the very throne, which is pregnant with disasters to the frame-work of nature, we are relieved from all apprehensions of the result, and, instead of fearing the annihilation of the earth, we can look for it to come forth, like gold, out of the furnace—purified, and adapted as an abode of righteousness for its future inhabitants.

In sight like unto an emerald.] The colour of the emerald, *green*, seems further to point to the earth, as though notwithstanding all the desolations wrought in it, it should ultimately revive.

In regard to this vision, as a whole, we may

not doubt but that, substantially, its various features are rehearsed in that presented to the Prophet Ezekiel; and which he sums up as “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.” Ezek. i. 28. As this phraseology intimates, Ezekiel only saw the “*likeness* of the glory.” For, in his day, though determined on, and virtually realised, in the Second Person, from everlasting, yet the incarnation had not then actually taken place. As in the pre-manifestations of the Christ to the Patriarchs of old, so it was but a form of humanity, assumed for the occasion, which Ezekiel beheld. Manhood was not then ‘taken into God,’ in that eternal and indissoluble union with the Person of the Son, which eventually obtained. This consideration accounts for the relation of *similarity*, instead of *actual identity*, which all the Old Testament visions purport to bear to Christ. The hypostatical union of the Divine and human natures was not yet accomplished; and, therefore, all manifestations then were short of the reality which at length appeared.

Ver. 4. *And round about the throne were four and twenty seats.*] The word “seats” should be *thrones*, for it is a repetition of the word throne in the first clause. Why it was not translated so seems very strange and unaccountable; if we may venture a supposition at all, it was, perhaps, because the object of our translators was to dis-

tinguish between the alleged glory of Him who sat upon the throne, and that of the party represented by the elders. Learned and good men, as they were, they could not allow the thought of a participation by creatures of the dignity that belonged to God. They forgot the emphatic language which our Lord uttered in His prayer for His disciples, in the 17th chapter of John: "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them." ver. 22. They could not brook that the glory which the Lord Jesus has, the Church should have; it was too much for them. And there are now many Christians who, similarly, shrink from such a thought, just because their estimate of the high calling of Believers is equally defective. They are awed, in fact, into incredulity, at the amazing riches of Divine grace; instead of exclaiming with the holy admiration of the Apostle: "Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God." 1 John iii. 1.

And upon the seats (thrones) I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold.] The question now occurs, who are represented by the four and twenty elders? And, as we shall see presently, more fully, they are the saints under former dispensations. There were in the temple twenty four courses of priests, and twenty four

courses of singers. See 1 Chr. xxiv. 1—4. And that the glorified worshippers of that dispensation should rank in harmony with this division is what might be expected.

Ver. 5. *And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices.*] The issue of these from the throne, indicates justice and judgment to be its characteristics. So we read, that, when the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, such were the characteristics of His throne then; grace had not yet appeared:—"There were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the Mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled." Ex. xix. 16; see also Ps. xviii. 13. The whole Psalm seems to give us the final actings of this very throne, whereby God avenges Himself on the enemies of Israel, and delivers them.

And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.] Attention has been already called to the representation of the Lord Jesus having the seven Spirits of God.* That is, that the Holy Ghost, in distributive unity, is the agent of Christ, to accomplish His will through the earth. And, in the 5th chapter and 6th verse, we have what confirms this:—"And I beheld, and, lo, in the

* See page 184.

midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth." Here "seven eyes" are said to be in the Lamb; and the explanation is, that they are "the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." The express symbol also of the same—"the seven lamps of fire"—in this place, occupy an administrative position; they are "*before the throne,*" as though for the accomplishment of *His* behests, who sits thereon.

From Zech. iii. 9, compared with iv. 1—10, it would appear that, in the latter day, this mighty and all-controlling agency of Christ will be especially exercised in the re-edifying of God's temple, at Jerusalem; as, we gather, with still more clearness, from a subsequent statement:—"Behold the man whose name is THE BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of His place, AND HE SHALL BUILD THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD, EVEN HE SHALL BUILD THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD; AND HE SHALL BEAR THE GLORY." Chap. vi. 12, 13.

Ver. 6. *And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal.*] As there is little doubt but that the mercy-seat, in the Jewish Temple, was a type of the throne of God, as it will yet be established on the earth, in the midst of the Jewish people; so we may regard the sea of glass

like unto crystal as answering to “the molten sea,” in Solomon’s Temple. Who will be the occupants of such honourable position, immediately before the throne, when the time comes, we learn from Rev. xv. 2.

And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts.] The word “beasts” should be *living creatures*. The original here is a different term from that which occurs in ch. xiii. and xvii. To determine whom they represent, we must refer to the 5th chapter:—“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, (*living creatures*), and four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song.” ver. 8, 9. Now, let us observe their song:—“Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.” ver. 9, 10. The four living creatures, then, and the twenty four elders, have redemption by the blood of Christ, the burden of their song. Therefore they, clearly, cannot represent angels. Moreover, they speak of being redeemed out of “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,”—

another distinguishing mark. Nor can they, on the other hand, be said to represent the attributes of Jehovah, as alleged by some—the notion is absurd. But, if we interpret them as setting forth “the body of Christ,”—the Church of this dispensation—every thing will be congruous.

To this end, let us turn to the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. The Apostle is there referring to the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was raised from the dead, he says, and was set at God’s right hand, “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” ver. 21. Then, at the next verse, the Apostle adds:—“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” ver. 22, 23. Now, we know the use of the body in relation to the head. The head plans and arranges; the body is the executive. So the Church is the body of Christ, as being to constitute His living sympathetic agency, by which, hereafter, He will govern and bless the universe.

Let us observe, also, that when this throne is seen by John, “the throne of God and of the Lamb,”—that is, in other words, the Father’s throne, and the Son acting on that throne,—he

sees, at the same time, the four and twenty elders round about the throne; and these four living creatures in the midst of the throne; which, surely, implies that, at the time when the judgments which follow are poured out, they who are thus represented,—the saints of the present and former dispensations,—have been raised and translated to be with the Lord. Other saints, of whom we read afterwards in Rev. xx. 4, 5, and in whom the series of the first resurrection will be closed, shall also be glorified with Christ. But we are not to confound them with those represented by the four and twenty elders, or by the four living creatures.

It is well, too, to note another point of distinction, that the elders occupy not that intimate connection with the throne of God that the four living creatures do. The latter are, as already noticed, in the midst of the throne, which, as it were, rests on them; but the former are ranged around, on separate thrones of their own. Undoubtedly, both the parties represented are *in glory*; but, still there is *subordination*. Is there, then, any notice elsewhere of this subordination between the saints of the present and past dispensations? I submit there is. Turn to the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews—the Apostle there presenting a panorama, as it were, of the glorious future—the scene of which

will be Mount Zion, in contrast with Mount Sinai of old—says to the believing Hebrews: “But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” Here, order and subordination are observed throughout. As to the first expression, the “church of the first-born,” we meet with it in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans:—“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the *first-born among many brethren.*” ver. 28, 29. Thus, God has predestinated his elect ones of this dispensation “to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.” Fitly, therefore, may they be denominated “*the church of the first-born.*” Priority of order, in believing, which also attaches to them, may contribute further ground for the title; for, the saints of this dispensation, both Jews and Gentiles are, emphatically, called *first trusters.* Thus, in the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, referring to the purport of God’s

grace, the Apostle says :—“ That we (*i. e.* Jews) should be to the praise of his glory, who *first trusted* in Christ.” And then he immediately adds, concerning the believing Gentiles : “ In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” ver. 12, 13. The Jews, *as a nation*, are, eventually, to trust in Christ ; and the Gentile nations, also, when He appears in His glory. But now, under this dispensation, that word of our Lord applies : “ Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” (John xx. 29.) Such, then, constitute the “ church of the first-born.”

As to the next class, the “ spirits of just men made perfect,” who answer to “ the twenty four elders,” we shall see more about them if we turn to the 11th chapter of the same Epistle. The Apostle, there speaking of the saints of former dispensations, from Abel downwards, after adducing instances of their faith, thus closes the subject :—“ And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise” (inheritance of the land in resurrection), “ God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be *made perfect.*” ver. 39, 40. When, therefore, these “ spirits of just men,” the saints of former dispensations, shall be “ made perfect,” they will still be distinct from “ the church of the first-born,” the saints of

this dispensation, for whom is reserved “*some better thing.*”

But, more particularly in regard to “the living creatures,” we shall glean further information concerning them if we refer to the 1st chapter of Ezekiel:—“And above the firmament that was over their heads” (the heads of the living creatures) “was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.” (The throne was above them, as it were, they bore up the throne, the occupant of which is now described.) “And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.” ver. 26, 27. Now, the red colour of amber, such as the appearance of fire presents, answers to the use of the sardine stone in the vision before us.

Another feature of correspondence follows:—“As the appearance of *the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain*, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.” ver. 28. Turn again to the 10th chapter of Ezekiel, where, after a minute description of these same living creatures, whom the Prophet interchangeably denominates

“the cherubims,” he sums up by saying, “This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and *I knew that they were the cherubims.*” ver. 20.

Now, the first notice that we have of the cherubims is in the 3rd chapter of Genesis:—“So he (the Lord God) drove out the man, and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” ver. 24. Translated thus, this passage would seem to import, as is commonly supposed, that the cherubims were angels, placed at the east of the garden of Eden, armed with swords to prevent Adam from having access to the tree of life. But the real translation, as it has been given by some of the most eminent Hebraists, is this:—‘So he drove out the man, and inhabited at the east of the garden of Eden, the Cherubim, and the fire of wrath infolding itself to keep (preserve the memorial of) the way to the tree of life. Adam had endeavoured to get access to the tree of life, but it was in his own, and a forbidden way. God therefore drove him out; but, at that very moment, He took care to set up a memorial of the true way, by inhabiting the Cherubims and the revolving fire,—fit emblem of His holiness, feeding, as it were, on its own resources, in the grace and glory of the Incarnate Word. In regard to this amended

translation, it may be well to add that, if guarding the tree of life from invasion were intended to be conveyed as the purport of the cherubim, the word rendered "*keep*" would not be that employed, which ever denotes a keeping in the way of observation. Thus, in Gen. xviii. 19:—"I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall *keep* the way of the Lord." It is in such sense as this that the word is used by the Spirit.

We read, next, of the Cherubim, in the appointment of the furniture for the tabernacle; they were *beaten out* of the mercy seat, not joined to it, nor soldered, but beaten out of one piece with it. Now we know that the Lord Jesus Christ was represented by the mercy seat; and, therefore, the cherubim, its proper adjunct, would seem to denote the Church, the relation of which to Christ is correspondingly given by the Apostle, in these remarkable words:—"For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. ii. 11. Was it not because of this association that the cherubic emblem was so dear to God, and that we find it continually resorted to in the adornment of His earthly Courts of Worship? Not only His presence chamber, but its very precincts being hung round, as it were, with this design—the picture of His

beloved object, the Church. See 2 Chron. iii. 7, 10, 14.

Full of eyes before and behind.] This denotes complete power of observation. And we read, in Heb. iv., “that all things are naked and open to Him with whom we have to do.” ver. 13. Such is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus, the great Head of the Church; or, as it is in this book, the Lamb “having seven eyes.” ch. v. 6. Here, we gather, that, out of His fulness, in this respect, as in others, His members receive from Him.

And the first beast (living creature) was like a lion.] The form of the lion, the king of the forest, as he is called, obviously suggests to us the idea of indomitable courage and strength. Accordingly we read:—“The righteous are bold as a lion.” Prov. xxviii. 1. And one of the titles of our blessed Lord is,—“The Lion of the tribe of Judah.” With such mighty and irresistible power, then, are we here taught that the Church of God shall be hereafter endowed, when she is installed into her glorious dignity.

The second beast (living creature) was like a calf.] In Ezekiel’s vision, the word is “oxen,” but we may consider the signification the same; for the one animal is but the advanced growth of the other. For what, then, is an ox remarkable? For patient labour, the quality on account of

which he was employed of old to tread out the corn. By this also, then, the Church shall be distinguished—*unwearied assiduity* in her allotted service.

The third beast (living creature) *had a face as a man.*] Man is remarkable for intelligence, of which his face is the index. This, therefore, will be another characteristic of the glorified church. Indeed, humanity is the predominant feature here, as in the vision of Ezekiel.

The fourth beast (living creature) *was like a flying eagle.*] Here is set forth another endowment of the Church—the rapid wing, and unblinking eye of the eagle, that pales not before the beams of the meridian sun. All these symbols combine to spell out the wondrous endowments of the glorified Church, with which, as the executive of Christ, her glorious Head, she will expatiate in the ages to come, over a travailing, and, at length, regenerate world. The description might be conveyed in so many words, but these symbols contain more than words, even pregnant sentences which levy a tribute of import off every type of animated nature; just as the symbol of “a Lamb as it had been slain” opens to us a voluminous meaning concerning our blessed Lord, which a mere verbal recital would fail to express.

Ver. 8. *And the four beasts* (living creatures) *ad each of them six wings about him.*] In

Isaiah's vision ch. vi.) there are six wings also ascribed to the living creatures, or Seraphim. But, in Ezekiel's vision, there are only four spoken of. Perhaps the difference arises from this, that, in Ezekiel, the living creatures are represented as *under the firmament*, and therefore one pair of wings to cover their feet could be dispensed with. But, in the case of the living creatures represented by Isaiah and John, there was need of these, because of their position being *above the firmament*. The whole form was exposed before the Divine presence, in the one instance, and so the reverential vailing had to be more complete. In the other, the firmament formed of itself a partial covering, and thus the distribution of the wings is economized.

And they were full of eyes within.] This indicates the Church's possession of a penetrative power of discernment, whereby not merely *external* things are taken cognizance of, as implied by the "eyes before and behind" in ver. 6, but their hidden depths and mysteries.

And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.] Here is their constant burst of adoration, in which there is no intermission day and night. The consciousness penetrates them, that they live, and move, and have their being in God, and they worship Him accordingly.

Ver. 9. *And when those beasts (living creatures) give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,*

Ver. 10. *The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne.]* Thus the foregoing worship proceeds not from the living creatures only. They begin it, indeed; to them is accorded the distinction of striking the key note, as it were. But, the twenty-four elders join in the adoration, and with equal self-renouncing homage, as appears from the words they utter:—

Ver. 11. *Saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.]* Oh, what self-emptying is this! and how glorifying to God! It seems specially set before us by the Holy Ghost, as a model of that worship, that will ever exhale towards God, from His redeemed creatures. Here will be their theme—their own vanity, and His all sufficiency and fulness, in which they shall be swallowed up.

“Thou only canst be said to be;
We but, at best, to seem.”

The foundation of such worship is being laid now, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, bringing the sinner to a sense of his own worthlessness,

and of his standing in Christ his Head. Here begins the abasement of his high thoughts, and his magnifying of God his Saviour. And thus he can now take up the song of the living creatures. Oh, let it be learned by us more and more every day! And to this end let us contemplate Christ,—God revealed in Christ. “In his light we shall see light.”

Jan. 19. 1857 -

CHAPTER V.

Verses 1—15.

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

It has been already remarked, that the 4th chapter contains a vision of the throne of God,—that throne whereon the Lord Jesus now sits,—as it will be arrayed hereafter, when the saints of this and past dispensations shall be caught up to their respective places, in connexion with it—*in the midst of it, and round about it*; that thence, also, the Lord Jesus will proceed to subjugate His enemies, and to make them His footstool. The

chapter before us—a continuation of the same vision, seems not a little to confirm this interpretation.

Ver. 1. *And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne.*] While it is not to be denied but that it is the Person of God the Father who is here represented as sitting on the throne, yet it must be remembered, that He is actually visible only in Christ; and, to intimate as much, His glorified humanity it is, which yields the descriptive terms here employed. Indeed, the Godhead never will be revealed otherwise than in Jesus; and the twofold personation seems resorted to only to help our comprehension of the fact, that the power now about to be put forth by Christ in recovering the earth out of the hands of its destroyers, is a *delegated* power, received from the Father. If it had sufficed God to communicate to us this truth *verbally*, there would not have been required such double personation; but in order to the communication of it by *vision*, this method became indispensable.

A book written within, and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.] “A book,” that is a roll; for, in ancient times, this was the form of all published writings; whence, also, the use of the term *volume*, which means, strictly, something rolled up. The peculiarity of this roll, or volume, was, that it was written not merely within, but on

the backside, and it was sealed with seven seals. It is, also, observable that as each seal is successively opened, there ensues a visitation of judgment on the earth.

The question now occurs,—what is the import of this seven sealed book? If we regard it, simply, as a record of events, at length about to be disclosed, the 12th chapter of Daniel supplies, I submit, a clue to the enquiry. At the 4th verse, it is said:—“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.” Such is the instruction given to Daniel by the Angel. A summary solution of the visions he had had, concerning what will take place in the last days, had been rehearsed to him; and he was naturally exercised as to the explanation of the details. But here he is told that such intelligence is reserved for a future period. Again, in the 9th verse of the same chapter, we meet with a similar communication in answer to Daniel’s enquiry:—“O, my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?” The Angel says,—“Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.” Now, in the summary disclosure of information which *had been given* to Daniel, one fact stands out very prominently,—namely, that the future will be a time of terrible calamity, out of which Daniel’s people, the Jews, will hardly be delivered; for,

we read, in the beginning of the chapter:—"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." ver. 1. To the same effect, we read of the roll of the book, which was opened before the Prophet Ezekiel:—"There was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe." Ezek. ii. 10. This, then, accords remarkably, as we shall see, with the character of the events ushered in by the opening of the seven sealed book before us.* But still this does not adequately explain its import. For it relates not so much to *information* recited in it, as to *transactions, which the very possession of it initiates*. Hence, also, it may be that, unlike the requirement to "eat the roll," as in the case of Ezekiel, and, also, of John, in another scene of this book, chap. x. 9, (such requirement simply indicating, I conceive, that out of their mouths, respectively, corresponding utterances were to issue,) here, the burden of the requirement is *the taking* of it. For further satisfaction, then, we may refer to a remarkable custom that obtained among the Jews, when they bought or redeemed estates.

* See Chapter vi.

is that correct?

In such cases, the transaction between the parties was registered in two books; one, open, as it were, for common reference; the other, its counterpart, sealed, and delivered to a responsible person, before witnesses, probably with a view to determine disputes, should the original become lost, or mutilated, or its authority be questioned. Then, when the time came for the purchaser to actually enter on the possession of his property, it would appear that if there were any demur, the *sealed* book was appealed to as his *title deeds*. This may be collected from the 32nd chapter of Jeremiah. Sentence of captivity had been pronounced by God, upon the Jewish people; but, after a certain period, they were to return and possess again the land of their inheritance. To give an assurance of this, Jeremiah records a symbolical act which God instructed him to perform:—“And Jeremiah said, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel, the son of Shallum thine uncle, shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is at Anathoth; for the right of redemption is thine to buy it.” ver. 6, 7. This field, it would seem, had become mortgaged in some crisis of distress by the Prophet’s uncle; but, at any time, it was competent for the *Göel*, or kinsman, like the Prophet, to intervene, and become its purchaser.*

* See Ruth.

Accordingly, Jeremiah is apprized that he would be solicited to do this. "So," he adds, "Hanameel, mine uncle's son, came to me in the court of the prison, according to the word of the Lord, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord." ver. 8. From the coincidence of the event with the announcement, the Prophet saw, at once, that the matter was ordered of God; and now he proceeds to recount his own procedure:—"And I bought the field of Hanameel, my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence (or, as in the margin, 'I wrote in the book') and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances." ver. 9, 10. The signatures of the witnesses were, probably, put upon the back of the book,—the deed,—as is done, sometimes, now; and this may suggest why the *backside* of the sealed book, in the Revelation, is said to be written on. "So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open. And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch, the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel,

mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days: For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Houses and fields, and vineyards, shall be possessed again in this land." ver. 11, 15. Thus Jeremiah was led of God to give an unequivocal token of what was yet in store for the people, even restoration to their land, at the appointed time. For, it is obvious, that if, without this assurance, he had given money for his cousin's inheritance, at the very moment when the enemy was about to overrun and possess the whole land, his conduct would have been imprudent in the extreme.

Now to apply this to the case before us,—what is the history of our earth? God made it "good," and it was consigned to Adam as his inheritance. But Adam sinned, and so the crown fell from his head; and, by a judicial permission this once fair domain of creation has lapsed into the hands of the usurper, Satan. Hence, he is called 'the God' and 'Prince of this world;' and acting as such, we find amongst his other arrogant preten-

sions, that when he entered the lists with our blessed Lord, he proffered Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, if He would fall down and worship him. Mat. iv. 1—10. But it was “the Second Adam,” with whom he had now to do,—man’s strong Redeemer, who came, not to parley for a *surrender* of earth’s dominion, but *righteously to rescue* it from the enemy’s grasp. Therefore, Satan left the field, baffled ; nor, when he resumed it again, as he did at the close of our Lord’s career, to scare Him, peradventure, from His great redemptive act of obedience unto death, was it with more success. Provision has accordingly been made, not merely for the salvation of man, but for the recovery of his lost inheritance. The redemption price has been duly paid ; and “the evidence of the purchase,” represented by the expressive symbol of the sealed book, is exhibited in this vision as in the Divine possession ; its formal production at length taking place, because *now*, “He whose right it is,” is coming forth to assert it. And this, He does amidst demonstrations of judgment, affecting every department of nature, as though to shake it from the enemy’s grasp. Doubtless, the recovery of *Israel’s land* is specially included in the whole scene, for *it* is under forfeiture, through transgression of a precise covenant ; and its redemption, in due form of righteous requirement, is the hinge

on which the establishment of the whole earth will eventually turn. See Isa. xxvi. 18, xlix. 8, 9. Bearing this in mind, the imagery employed throughout the vision before us, will derive an emphasis of illustration from the usages which prevailed touching the redemption of personal estates amongst the Jewish people. See Lev. xxv. 25, Num. xxxvi. 9, Deut. xxv. 5, Ruth iv. 1—6.

Ver. 2. *And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?*] Thus the great plaintiff in the eventful suit of earth's redemption is summoned to appear. As Boaz said concerning Elimelech's inheritance:—"if thou wilt redeem it, redeem it;" questioning the kinsman's disposition to interfere,—so enquiry is now made for the competent one who will act the *Göel's* part for man, and recover his lost estate; and the sign of his competency is left to be determined by his putting in his claim to the title deeds—the sealed book.

Ver. 3. *And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.*] Thus, no one—for all creaturehood is excluded by the original term, not merely man—is found throughout the whole realm of creation to advance any pretensions to the sealed book, that is, to what it imported. The undertaking is too vast to be even *contemplated* by the united ranks of animated being.

Ver. 4. *And I wept much, because no man (no one) was found worthy to open, and to read the book, neither to look thereon.*] John was thus moved at the thought of no Göel, or Redeemer, appearing to answer the summons of the angel. His sympathy with God concerning a groaning creation and a still defiled land of promise, led to this emotion. Surely, the glorious issue of all this now communicated *to us*, ought to inspire counter emotions of joy and gladness. Reader! is this the case?

Ver. 5. *And one of the elders.*] One of the four and twenty crowned elders—that is, as we have seen,* a glorified Jewish saint—interposes. And *his* interposition here, instead of one of the four living creatures, would seem to betoken, like the other features of this vision, that the matter in suspense, involved, in an especial degree, *Jewish* hope.

Saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.] Or as it might be more forcibly, “the Lion *out of* the tribe of Judah.” This again, in conformity with other features of the vision already noticed, indicates that it relates to the actual redemption of the earth and of Israel’s inheritance; for the “Lion” is emblematic of resistless avenging might, as may be seen by referring to one or two passages. For example,

* Page 266, 273.

amongst the blessings of the tribes pronounced by the Patriarch Jacob, we read this utterance concerning Judah :—“ Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise : thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies ; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion’s whelp ; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up ; he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion ; who shall rouse him up ? ” Gen. xlix. 8, 9.

The connection here, evidently denotes, that work of an avenging nature will yet distinguish the career of the Royal tribe of Judah. Again, in the memorable prophecy of Balaam, we read :—“ How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel ! ” “ God brought him forth out of Egypt ; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn : he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. *He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion,—who shall stir him up ?* ”* The import of the comparison to a Lion is equally obvious here. In fact, Judah and Israel will yet exhibit the properties of the Lion, in dealing with the nations. (See Micah v. 8.) So, from this title, worn by our blessed Lord, “ the Lion of the tribe of Judah,” we gather that *they* will be but the arm of His strength, the exhibitors of His prowess. †

* Num. xxiv. 5, 8, 9.

† See Psalm cxlix. 6.

The root of David.] This title, like the former, is significant of the subjugation of enemies; for David, as a man of war, was distinguished for this. It may also be thought to introduce to our notice the fact of essential Deity inhering in our Lord's person; and without which he could not acquit himself as the Mighty One, that he is represented to be, either morally or potentially. (See Isaiah xi. 10, and Psalm cx.)

But it is a questionable procedure to predicate any act or relation of the Christ, of His divine nature apart from the human, and therefore it is rather commended to the reader, that the foregoing and present title should be taken in combination, and as intimating that our Lord, as the promised one from the beginning, is the source of Judah's destined prowess and Royalty, without the antecedent contemplation of whom, David had never been placed on the throne of Israel. See Luke i. 67, &c.

Hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.] The challenge was for the appearance of one *worthy* to engage in this enterprise. Now we see to what the required worthiness pointed,—even to the achievement of our blessed Lord, as the stronger, than the strong man armed, who had already, by his death and resurrection, virtually taken from the latter his armour, and divided the spoils. The word *prevailed*, implies

victory after conflict. And because the undertaking is sure in result, it is represented as good as done—he “*hath* prevailed to open the book.”

Ver. 6. *And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.*] Under the symbol of a Lamb, gashed, marked with sacrificial wounds, but still alive, the Lord Jesus is represented, as occupying the Father’s throne; intimating the connection between His humiliation and death, and the redemption accomplished by Him, and now about to be actually applied to the rescue of the earth.

Having seven horns.] All through the Scripture “a horn” is the emblem of power. See 1 Sam. ii. 1; 2 Sam. xxii. 3; Psalms lxxv. 4; cxxxii., 17; cxlviii. 14; Lam. ii. 3; Ezekiel xxix. 21; Daniel viii. 5, 20, 21, &c. Therefore, “seven horns” denote plenitude of power, as vested in the Lord Jesus.

And seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.] The “seven eyes” are thus explained to denote the distributive agency of the Holy Spirit, the executive of God’s will, throughout the earth; and their possession by the Lamb indicates, that the direction of this all-pervading agency is conferred on the Lord Jesus. (See Zech. iv. 10; 2 Chron. xvi. 9.) Thus He is represented as endowed with Almighty

power ; power derived through His humiliation unto death. ‘He was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, that He might be crowned with glory and honour.’ (See Heb. ii. 9; Psalm viii.) Thus, too, we read in the epistle to the Philippians—“Wherefore, (that is, *because* he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,) *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name : That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth ; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Ver. 7. *And he came, and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.*] This is in exact accordance with the vision in Daniel, where the Ancient of Days, (the Father,) being represented, as in the present vision, seated upon a throne, one like unto the Son of Man is seen coming to him, and receiving *a kingdom, dominion, and glory.*† Here, in the Revelation, the inheritance of the earth, which substantially means the same thing, is conveyed to Christ from the Father, by the formal instrument of the sealed book, the opening of the seals of which, is as it were so many judicial stages towards the establishment of His righteous empire.

* Phil. ii. 8—11.

† Dan. vii. 9—14.

Ver. 8. *And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps.*] In the Old Testament Scriptures we find the use of the harp associated with joy and gladness, (2 Chron. xxix. 25; Ps. lxxi. 22, xcii. 3, cxlix. 3.) just as misery is expressed by noting the absence of it,—“the joy of the harp ceaseth.” Isa. xxiv. 8. Thus, then, to indicate the exuberance of heaven’s joys, at the commencing deliverance of a groaning earth, this feature of the glowing description is not wanting, and harps, accordingly, are seen with the risen and glorified saints.

And golden vials full of odours.] The word here rendered *vials*, is properly cups, or *basins*. It is the word employed by the Septuagint to denote the basins (golden) which were used in the temple to contain the offerings of meal or incense. See 1 Kings vii. 50, 2 Chron. iv. 22, Ex. xxv. 23—28, xxxvii. 10—16. vas

Which are the prayers of the saints.] The antecedent to “*which*” is “the golden vials.” In them, the prayers of the saints, then upon the earth, shall be presented before God,—brought, as it were, to His remembrance by these glorious ones. Thus it is signified that the great approaching act of redemption, which is here hailed with joy, will have been promoted by the earnest prayers of the suffering remnant on earth;*

* Compare Luke xviii. 7, 8.

whilst in the offering of these prayers is disclosed one way in which the *glorified* Church will then act out their Priestly character. This yields no pretence, be it remarked, for the invocation of departed saints in the Church of Rome, for all such are, as yet, disembodied spirits. Moreover, there is not the slightest allusion here to the prayers of which they are the remembrancers as having been addressed to them. The appeal to this and like passages of Scripture, to prop up Romish superstition, is but another illustration out of many that might be adduced, of her habit of forestalling and perverting to her own aggrandizement the glorious prospects of the future held out by the word of prophecy.

Ver. 9. *And they sung a new song.*] In various places of Scripture, the establishment of Messiah's dominion over the earth, is celebrated as the subject of "*a new song.*" (See Psalm xcvi. 1, xcviii. 1, cxliv. 9, cxlix. 1; Isaiah xlii. 10.) And such expression seems in keeping with the contemplation of a *new creation*, thus ushered in. Doubtless, it is because of the transition to this which now occupies the minds of the Heavenly choir, as they behold the sealed book taken possession of, that the same character of strain is ascribed to them:—

Saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and

hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.] Such is their burst of adoring praise, wherein they recognize the worthiness of the Lamb to take and unseal the portentous book in question; and, as the ground of His worthiness, they celebrate His great achievements as Redeemer, redeeming *them* by His precious blood, culling them from amongst human kind as the choicest Mosaic of his grace; and redeeming *the earth itself*, as the sphere over which they shall expatiate in the exercise of a benignant Sovereignty. For so it is implied in what follows:—

Ver. 10. *And hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.]* As kings, they will govern; as priests, they will bless the earth and its saved inhabitants. They will be joint associates with the Lord Jesus, in His Melchisedek glory. To the reflex influence of such practical hope, we find a remarkable reference in the 1st Epistle of Peter, where, after exhorting believers to the cultivation of a gracious walk, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, the Apostle adds, as his emphatic argument:—“Knowing that ye are thereunto called, THAT ye should inherit blessing,” (1 Peter iii. 9); not *a* blessing—the article is not needed, and diminishes the force of the appeal. The beneficent functions of the future, the Apostle would have

believers rehearse now, as far as possible. Since they are to fill a province of “blessing” hereafter, he intimates that they ought to dispense such now, in their intercourse with the world. It may be well to observe, that for dropping the article, (and it is not in the original,) from the foregoing passage, and giving the substantive an active verbal meaning, we have clear authority, from the epistle of James, where he says:—“Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing.” (James iii. 10.) That the word *blessing* is here used in an active sense, is obvious; and this is confirmed by the preceding verse, where—“*we bless God,*” is employed as the equivalent expression.

The phraseology “reign on the earth,” has stumbled some readers, but it may be as well read “*over* the earth.” It does not imply that these glorified ones will be commingled with men in the flesh, though they shall have intercourse with them; but, that from their seat in the Heavens, the New Jerusalem, they shall pre-eminently administer the government of the earth.

Ver. 11. *And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels, round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.]* To the choir of the redeemed are now added the leaders of a responsive

chorus,—an innumerable company of angels,—whose introduction completes the parallel between this scene and that pourtrayed in Hebrews xii., as the object of animating hope to believers. Answering to “God the Judge of all;” to “Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant,” and “the blood of sprinkling;” to “the church of the first-born, and to “the spirits of just men made perfect,”—we have had already, in this vision, “Him that sat on the throne,”—“the Lamb in the midst of the throne,”—“the four living creatures,”—and “the twenty-four elders.” Now, we have the complement of the panorama in Hebrews,—*the attendant angels*:—

Ver. 12. *Saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*] Thus, the angels that excel in strength,—God’s agents, as it would appear, in His kingdom of Providence, do what they can to swell the exulting anthem of the risen saints. They cannot, indeed, celebrate the praises of the Lamb for bringing redemption *to themselves*, nor for investing in their hands the government of the redeemed earth; for, “unto the angels God hath not put in subjection the world to come.”* But they can pay their homage to, and echo their admiration of, the Person of the great Redeemer;

* Heb. ii. 5.

and joyfully contemplate the consummation of—all power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, as they originally came from Him, the prolific womb of the Divine mind,—now, at length, in recovered perfection, converging to Him their rightful focus, and that through the predestined economy of the glorified Church.

Ver. 13. *And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne. and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*] Thus the chorus widens still more. *All creation joins in, inanimate as well as animate.* For the virtue of the blood of the Lamb is to be felt to the remotest bounds of being. All things are to be reconciled by it, “whether they be things in earth, or things in Heaven.”* *Now, “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together;”†* but it waits for its allotment, in the approaching Jubilee, which it shall at last obtain. For, when God shines upon Israel, then, shall his saving health be made known among the nations; and then, too, shall *the earth yield her increase*, (Ps. lxvii.) “the trees of the wood rejoice,” (Ps. xcvi.) “the floods clap their hands,” and “the hills be joyful together.” (Ps. xcvi.) “The beasts of the field;

* Romans viii. 22.

† See Coloss. i. 20.

the fowl of the air ; and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas” —all shall then proclaim the Lord’s name to be excellent in all the earth. (Ps. viii.) Then, also, shall the ravening propensities of the animal tribes cease. “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed ; their young ones shall lie down together : and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.”* All this, as well as the other spheres of blessedness, in which the divine goodness is to be exhibited, shall be the fruit of redemption ; and, therefore, the rehearsal scene of praise before us would not be perfect, if “everything that hath breath, yea, universal nature, were not brought in uttering its hallelujah.”†

As this is a principal passage of Scripture appealed to by some to justify the notion that, eventually, all creaturehood will be saved ; it may be well to observe, that here, as in other glowing pictures of the future, the glory of the attained consummation affects not, by way of undoing, the

* Isaiah xi. 6—9.

† See Psalm cxlviii.

evil incurred during the process. For example, "ALL *Israel* shall be saved" at the coming of Christ; but yet numerous generations will have meanwhile perished. So here, comprehensive as is this ascription of blessing, and honour, and glory, and power to Christ; yet it interferes not with the condition of the lost of either human or angelic kind. The time will be, doubtless, when there will be no addition to their number, and all whose destiny shall not have been already sealed, will flourish in the exuberance of a redeemed being; and it is this circle of creaturehood that is here included. But we cannot with any propriety go beyond this, and take a retrospective compass. Even if it be thought, by comparison with Phil. ii. 9—11, that this chorus of the creatures is numerically universal, and takes in the homage of the *lost*; still, *this* involves not the doctrine of their ultimate salvation; for, in the way of *subjection*, it is ruled that the whole universe of matter and mind shall honour Jesus, but this is a very different thing from salvation. Let us take, for example, the case of evil spirits at our Lord's first advent. "Even the devils are *subject* unto us through thy name," was the report which His disciples made to Him. Luke x. 17. And yet, it is obvious these devils were not *saved*. Moreover, it is worthy of remark, that in 1 Cor. xv. 28, where—of the ultimate stage of the Lord's judicial career, it is

most distinctly said, “that all things shall be *subdued* unto him”—the word employed is the same that is here used by the disciples, in reference to the *subjection* of the devils.

Ver. 14. *And the four beasts (living creatures) said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.*] As the song of adoration had *issued* from the quarter of the glorified saints; so now it is closed by them; but, still, amidst their unity, a distinctness is preserved between the called of the present and past dispensations; the former taking the precedence, as in chap. iv. 8, with the utterance of their profound *Amen*; the latter prostrating themselves in self-abasing worship. Thus is signified their adoring complacency in the purposes of their God, as they see their completion now undertaken by the Lord Jesus, who establishes his claim to the sealed book.

Christian reader! would you have satisfaction and joy in the prospect here opened out to you? Then realize your position as brought nigh to God by the blood of the Lamb; yea, as participants in His glorious counsels touching those events which intimidate the men of the world. Your privilege it is, having the mind of Christ, to rejoice in the universal shaking by which Satan's empire, and the course of the evil age will be subverted. In this view, it is remarkable that

what the Prophet Haggai foretells concerning the shaking of the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the dry land, is denominated by the Apostle Paul, *a promise*.* Thus, whatever terrible crisis awaits the world, the child of God, desiring its ultimate bearing on the glory of his Lord and Master, and the interests of a groaning creation, can say, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

Jan. 26. 1857

CHAPTER VI.

Verses 1—17.

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were, the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse : and he that sat on him had a bow ; and a crown was given unto him : and he went forth, conquering and to conquer.

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

4 And there went out another horse *that was* red : and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another : and there was given unto him a great sword.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse ; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

* Compare Haggai ii. 7, with Hebrews xii. 26—28.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

IN entering upon the interpretation of the seals, which now comes before us,—one of the great divisions of this book,—it may be desirable to suggest to the reader, by way of introductory remarks, the relation in which all three septenaries of seals, trumpets, and vials, stand to each other. It is submitted, then, that in the first—the seals, we have spread out before us a summary rehearsal of those Divine judgments which will begin with the imminent period of the Lord's day, or, day of the Lord, as already explained,* and run their course, upon Jews and Gentiles, up to the personal appearing of the Lord Jesus *with* His saints, in the clouds of heaven; that is, this series of visions comprehends, in a general way, the visitations on the world at large, during the two moities of three and a half years especially treated of in this book, and which, together, compose the last remaining week, or hebdomad of years in Daniel's prophecy, which has been in suspense ever since Messiah was cut off.† In that much

* Pages 31—34.

† Dan. ix. 24—26.

canvassed prophecy, in which seventy weeks or *hebdomads* of years,* are spoken of as being to issue in the long promised blessedness of the Jewish people, in their own land, under Messiah, it would appear that seven of the number—forty nine years, and sixty two—four hundred and thirty four years, have already elapsed, bringing us up to the time of our blessed Lord's rejection by His own people, when He came to them as "a minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the Fathers." Rom. xv. 8. With this event, in like manner, as in all the prophecies which celebrate the advent and kingdom of Messiah,† a pause in the fulfilment of the Divine purpose towards the Jews and the

* It is necessary thus to vary the translation of the term in question, in order to meet the current tradition of a day in prophecy meaning a year, derived from the use of the word *week* in this passage, which word with us is certainly a numeral of seven days; but the numeral in Hebrew is not so limited in its import, being rather of the nature of an adjective, leaving the substantive whether of days or years to be understood. Moreover, it is worthy of remark, that, within a few verses of the passage containing this term, where it is employed to denote periods of *days*, the word *days* is expressly added: "I Daniel was mourning three full weeks, (literally, as in the margin, *weeks of days*.) Dan. x. 2. This would rather imply that the term, without the adjunct, denotes periods of *years*; so that there is no occasion to take *days* as signified, and then to transmute them into years—such result being arrived at, at once, by understanding *years* to be denoted.

† See Isaiah xi. 1—4, and Jeremiah xxiii. 5, 6.

nations, has ensued, which, at length, terminating in the removal of the *intercept* of this dispensation, the remaining week or hebdomad of the Prophet will begin to run its course. What will then succeed is also recited by Daniel,—namely, the career of the Antichrist, under the denomination of “the Prince that shall come.” And here, as in the Apocalypse, a division of the seven years occurs: “he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week,” (one hebdomad of years): “*and in the midst of the week* he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” ver. 27.

The events under the seals, then, I repeat, cover this *whole* period—the great tribulation which they shadow forth, as affecting both the Jewish and Gentile nations up to the crisis of the actual coming of the Lord with clouds, being hereby comprised in the *one* prophetic range. This *range* is indeed completed before the last seal in the series is introduced; but this is obviously in order to the use of the latter as a connecting link with the visions, under the trumpets and vials, which immediately follow. The reflecting reader is thus advertized, that only a broad outline of the future has been given under the *seal* visions, and that now the Spirit turns back to go over the ground again, filling up the details. Accordingly, as we shall see, *in loco*, the trumpet visions indicate the woes which are to come especially on

the Apostate Jews;* and the vials, those which are to come upon the arrogant Gentiles. In a word, the condensed line of prophecy in the seals is distended by the Spirit into another parallel line, made up of the trumpets and the vials in continuation,—the seventh trumpet manifestly *initiating* the outpouring of the seven vials, whilst it celebrates the consummation, by means of them, of the Divine purpose.† The difference in relative position, between the seventh seal and the seventh trumpet, in regard to the series which respectively follows them, seems to be, that the former is used as a turning point, whereon, after completing one grand rehearsal of His subject in the six previous seals, the Spirit leads us back to begin another *de*

* This application of the trumpets may seem at first sight to be at variance with their wonted association with Jewish victory over enemies, as at the fall of Jericho; and with the national festivals which they solemnly ushered in. But a little reflection will suffice to show that such import of the symbol is not here departed from, but rather adhered to; for, they are apostate Jews—the hinderers of blessing to the real Israel—upon whom the portended judgments fall, purging them out of the elect community. Moreover, as clearly indicated by the seventh trumpet—the last of the series, the outpouring of these judgments is immediately preparatory to the plagues on the Antichristian nations, which will at length vindicate the Divine faithfulness in behalf of His ancient people. Thus there exists no *a priori* objection to the view above stated, to prejudice us against it, in our examination of the evidence, when we come to it.

† Compare Rev. x. 7, with xi. 15, &c.

novo ; whereas the latter—the seventh trumpet, is as an *overture* ushering in the outburst of Divine vengeance, under the vials, upon the Antichristian nations, subsequent to the execution of judgment on the Jews. Thus the trumpets and vials are successive to each other, but parallel to the series of the seals.

With this aspect and order assigned to the trumpets and vials, the tenor of Old Testament prophecy remarkably corresponds. For example, in the prophet Isaiah we read, after a description of the tremendous retribution to be visited upon the Jews : “ Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine : Thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, *Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury ; thou shalt no more drink it again : But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee ;* which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over : and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.” (ch. li. 21—23.) To the same effect, and still more explicitly, Jeremiah is commissioned—after, in like manner, *beginning with Jerusalem*, to take the wine cup of the Lord’s fury at his hand, and make *all the nations* to drink of it ; to which it is added : “ If they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto

them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts ; Ye shall certainly drink. For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished ? Ye shall not be unpunished : for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts.” (ch. xxv. 28, 29.) Again, it is intimated in the book of Deuteronomy, that after most severe plagues to come upon Israel, not unlike those which are imported by the trumpets, the Lord God will “avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land and to his people ;” and herein the surviving nations are summoned, as it were, to rejoice with them. Deut. xxxii. 43.

But the passage which, I conceive, throws most light collaterally on the distinctive character here assigned to the trumpets and the vials, occurs in the Epistle to the Romans, where the Apostle, contemplating the crisis of Jewish apostacy and Gentile corruption, refers to “*the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*”—as though having the very subject of the Apocalypse in his thoughts, under the same head in which it was shown to John, “the Lord’s day,” or “day of the Lord.” Reciting the course of retribution which will mark that day, the Apostle continues :—“Who will render to every man according to his deeds : to them who by patient

continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, *eternal life* :* but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.” (Rom. ii. 5—9.) Here, the whole context makes it evident that this classification, without reference to the Church,† points emphatically to the great division of mankind, into Jew and Gentile, the one being “*in the law*,” the other being “*without law* ;” all which is in harmony with the distribution which obtains in the Apocalypse. But, further, and principally—there is the same *order* here, as there, in regard to the execution of the threatened judgments, “*of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile* ;” and, besides, that it is only with *earthly* judgments, (that is, judgments inflicted on men as inhabitants of the earth,) that the observance of this order is compatible ; to such judgments alone, whatever others may ensue after death, are the *terms* here employed by the Spirit—at least the category of them, “*indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*”—fairly applicable.‡

* Compare Matt. xxv. 46, where the same expression, it is obvious, refers not to the Church of this dispensation, but to the saved nations in Messiah’s kingdom.

† Compare 1 Cor. x. 32.

‡ Of the above expressions, the second is the only one that,

Hereby, then, as in the seals, are summed up the contents of the Apocalyptic trumpets, and vials. The epitome, in both cases, reaches up from the beginning to the close of the day of wrath,—the trumpets rehearsing what will befall the Jews (judgment thus beginning at the house of God)—and the vials, what will befall the Gentiles: both which latter series, in continuous sequence, converge, with that of the seals, to the one common focus—the setting up of the kingdom of the Son of Man.

With this simple arrangement of the great integral parts of this book, let us proceed to the interpretation of the particular chapter now before us; only, by way of preliminary information, to prepare us for the better apprehension of its import, it may be well to glance at one or two passages in the Old Testament. And, first, let

from its use in the New Testament, can be *supposed* to refer to inflictions on men *after death*; the others, especially the last, invariably refer to sufferings connected with man's earthly condition. To verify this allegation, the reader has only to consult his Greek Concordance. See also Psalm lxxix. 49, (Septuagint version) where *the same words* occur (the last excepted, the import of which is too unequivocal to need confirmation) in reference to the plagues sent upon the Egyptians:—"He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, *wrath*, and *indignation*, and *trouble*." Compare, further, Isaiah viii. 22, (Sept.) a parallel prophecy of the future.

us examine the Prophet Zechariah, keeping in mind, that, as the first four seals are successively opened, *horses* make their appearance:—"Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth." (Zech. i. 7—10.) Thus, it would appear, that the horses in this vision, mounted, we may presume, by their riders,—as certainly the first is,—represent Angelic agents employed by God, to reconnoitre, as it were, the earth, and to counteract Satan, the author of all mischief, who, as we learn from the history of Job, also goes to and fro through the earth. (Job i. 7.) And, now, they make their report as to how they find matters:—"And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth

sitteth still, and is at rest.” (ver. 11.) This is a description of the state of things throughout this whole dispensation of ours, at least touching Jerusalem, which is, here, the subject of Divine enquiry. ‘All the earth’ is ‘*still*’—caring nothing about Zion; although the eyes of the Lord are continually there, where he has once put His name, and will yet do so again. Mankind, at large, are utterly regardless of the Lord’s purpose to build up Zion, and raise up the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down. Hereupon, as though this report of Gentile indifference towards the long cherished purpose of God, awakened a holy indignation in the Angelic Functionary through whom it passed, the angel of the Lord answers and says:—“O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?” (ver. 12.) The seventy years’ captivity already past, it appears, is the definite subject of this enquiry; but it is manifestly typical of the whole period of Gentile domination over Israel, under the four great empires which Daniel saw in vision; and, therefore, Zechariah is instructed to continue:—“Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little

displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem." (ver. 14—17.) And not only is this utterance inspired in the Prophet, but, in addition thereto, a *vision* is presented to him of "four horns," which are said to have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem,—answering, be it observed, to the four Gentile empires of Daniel; and then, of four intelligent agents (carpenters they are called) commissioned of God to "fray" and "cast them out." (ver. 18—21.)

We may next consult the 6th chapter of this prophecy:—"And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked; and behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of brass. In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot, black horses; and in the third chariot, white horses; and in the fourth chariot, grisled and bay horses. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth

from standing before the Lord of all the earth.” (ver. 1—5.) Taking this description,—“*the four spirits of the heavens,*”—in connection with what is said in the 104th Psalm, “Who maketh *his angels spirits*; his ministers a flaming fire,”—it seems that, here, again, is a representation of Angelic agency; and it is further observable, that the horses, in this vision, correspond, in number and colour,* with those of John’s vision, in the chapter before us. Their progress, too, in both cases, seems to import the same thing,—the over-spreading of the earth with judgment. “The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them: and the grisled go forth toward the south country. And the bay went forth, and sought to go, that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get ye hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.” (ver. 6—8.) Now, without aiming at an exact interpretation of this whole vision, we

* Grisled and bay, indeed, in the one description, answers not, verbally, to *pale* in the other; but, substantially, the terms import the same. A grey livid colour, like the hue which death imparts to the body, may be said to be the meaning of *grisled*; and to this *pale* is obviously equivalent.

may gather, generally, that these horses and chariots denote Angelic agency employed on the earth; and, it would appear, that the commissioning of this agency, at the time in question, will quiet God's spirit, (or *anger*, as it is in the Septuagint,) in the *north* country,—the quarter which will harbour the great enemy of Israel; and, doubtless, this will be by pervading that region with inflictions of Divine wrath. With this information, which seems to be collateral with the main purport of this vision before us, we now proceed to the details.

Ver. 1. *And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals.*] Here, and all through, in connection with the seals, "the Lamb" is the symbol of our blessed Lord; therefore, unless the evidence be very cogent, we should be indisposed to admit that there is a transition to a different symbol of him in the next verse.

And I heard as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts (living creatures) saying, come and see.] It should be, "I heard one of the four living creatures saying, as it were with a voice of thunder." And, as the audible voice of the Father in Heaven, which echoed to the cry of Jesus, as recorded in John xii. 28, sounded like thunder in the ears of the people, we thus discern another mark of the God-like endowment of the glorified Church.

Ver. 2. *And I saw, and behold a white horse : and he that sat on him had a bow : and a crown was given unto him : and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*] The common interpretation of this symbol is, that it represents the Lord Jesus Christ, some think at his *first*, others, at his *second* advent. And, in regard to the latter view, there is one passage in the Psalms, which seems, at first sight, to give much weight to it. Celebrating the triumphs of Messiah in the latter days, the Psalmist says : “Thou art fairer than the children of men : grace is poured into thy lips : therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness ; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies ; whereby the people fall under thee.” Ps. xlv. 2—5. In this vision there is certainly a contemplation of our blessed Lord, at his second advent, as seated on a horse, and with his arrows making a triumphant progress against his enemies. But, as the corresponding vision of the horses and chariots in Zechariah, sets forth angelic agency, it ought to commend itself to us as rather probable that this belongs to the same category. Besides, as already observed, the Lord Jesus has just been presented

to us, under his own peculiar symbol of "*the Lamb*," and the sudden transition to another symbol whereby to describe Him, is somewhat incongruous. I prefer, therefore, to regard the conqueror upon the white horse as signifying the judicial letting loose by angelic agency, of the great coming Antichrist, who is to overrun the nations with the success of his arms. Nor is the description given of him here without its parallel in Old Testament prophecy.

Let us refer, for example, to the Prophet Habakkuk, reading from the beginning of the 1st Chapter, in order to appreciate, more fully, his emphatic allusions: "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth. Behold, ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through

the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places that are not their's. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it." (ver. 1—10.) Now, here is a reference to the victorious progress of a mighty host; and it is quite plain that the *range* of the Prophet's vision extends beyond any past history of Chaldean invasion.

In the next verse, moreover, the leader of this host, like the wilful king of Daniel, the Antichrist, is represented as so intoxicated by his success, not knowing that he is merely the instrument in Jehovah's hand, that he blasphemously ascribes it to the patronage of one who is called "*his God*," doubtless Satan:—"Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god." (ver. 11.) This seems to complete the picture which is laid

before us in Rev. xiii., showing, if not sufficiently implied there without it, that the Beast will worship the Dragon who gives him “his power and seat and great authority.” Hereupon, the Prophet, as though astonished at this exorbitancy of impiety, bursts out into the apostrophe:—“Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die”—that is, the Jewish people shall not perish, notwithstanding the devastating progress of this terrible enemy; for, it is against *them* his rage will be specially directed. Then, recognising God’s design in all this, the Prophet adds:—“O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment.” (ver. 12.) This intimates that, eventually, when God has served himself by this great enemy, as by Pharaoh of old, he will inflict his sore retribution upon him and his hosts, for their boastful arrogance.

Advancing now to the 2nd Chapter, we find the same theme continued, the setting forth the rapacious character of this great conqueror;—“Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, (or Hades,) and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people.” (ver. 5.)

With similar allusions to this impious development of ambition and power, all prophecy abounds.

In Isaiah, we read, that when his downfall comes, the reflection of beholders will be:—"Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness and destroyed the cities thereof." (ch. xiv. 16, 17.) In Daniel it is said that he shall "think to change times and laws" (ch. vii. 25); that his power shall be mighty. . . . that "he shall destroy wonderfully" (ch. viii. 24); that he "shall do according to his will" (ch. xi. 36); that he "shall stretch forth his hand upon the countries" (v. 42.)

Again, in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul writes concerning him that "his coming is after the working of Satan, with all power." (2 Thess. ii. 9.) And in this book of the Revelation, we read, that "power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." (ch. xiii. 7.) Thus, from other Scriptures, we have exhibited to us, in the career of Antichrist, a counterpart of what is depicted in this first seal,—the warrior upon the white horse, going forth conquering, and to conquer.

Ver. 3, 4. *And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast (living creature) say, come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was*

given unto him a great sword.] This symbol portends the raging of internecine conflicts in *the land* (of Palestine), for so the original for “earth” may be translated here, and this specification serves better for the avoidance of confusion with the preceding seal. Therein, is set forth the subjugation of the nations by a new dynasty, amidst the convulsions of universal war; here, is given the phase of that awful period, as it will locally affect the returned Jewish people.

Now, turning to Matthew xxiv., we have a plain prophecy of our Lord to the same effect. We had better consult the chapter from the commencement: “And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.” (v. 1.) This was after Jesus had retired apart from the devoted city and its sanctuary, having uttered the ominous words:—“Behold your house is left unto you desolate.” The disciples, now drawing his attention to the magnitude of the sacred edifice, seem to court an explanation of how any disaster could befall it. With a solemn asseveration, accordingly, our Lord answers:—“See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” (ver. 2.) He said this, probably, when He was on His way to the Mount of Olives.

And, now, the narrative proceeds to relate that, “As he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be?” (*i. e.* the catastrophe, to which He had alluded, the subversion of the Temple;) “and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” or, more properly, ‘*age?*’ (ver 3.)—for the coming of Messiah was expected to terminate the age that then was. “And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” (ver. 4, 5.) Thus, the Jewish disciples of the latter day,* addressed

* That the above prophecy, even in its most prominent features, relates to the future, as here intimated, derives credit from the fact that in the third century it was not considered to have been fulfilled by any events that had intervened from the time of its delivery. Upon this subject, the following is the testimony of *Origen*.

“There were not many men in the time of the Apostles, who said that they were Christ; there was perhaps Dositheus of Samaria, the founder of the Dositheans; and Simon, of whom the Acts of the Apostles make mention, who called himself the Great Power of God; but besides these, there have been none within my knowledge either before or since.” And again: “Not yet have many in the Church itself become traitors; not yet have there arisen false prophets to deceive many; nor as yet have Christ’s servants been hated by all nations, even to the very extremities of the earth for His Name’s sake: nor has the Gospel of the kingdom been yet preached in the whole world. For no one says that the Gospel has been preached amongst all the Ethiopians, especially amongst those beyond the River; nor yet amongst the Seres; nor have they

through their prototypes, to whom our Lord now speaks, are cautioned to beware of him who will come in his own name, with the glare and pageantry of resistless conquest, imposing upon the mass of the nation, so that they shall receive him as their Messiah. Then follows, what completes the parallel with the first seal:—"And ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars,* see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." (ver. 6, 7.) These things however, adds our Lord, are only "the beginning of sorrows," (ver. 8); accordingly, He goes on to say, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you." (ver. 9.) The unnatural details, also, of this persecution are recited

in the East heard the word of Christ's religion. What are we to say of the Britons, or of the Germans, on the shores of the Ocean, or of the Barbarians, Dacians, Sarmathians, and Scythians, of whom very many have not yet heard the word of the Gospel, but will hear it at the very end of the world?" . . . "Many, not of the Barbarian nations only, but even of those of our own world, have not to this day heard the word of Christ's religion."—*Comment. in S. Matt.*

Hereupon, remarks a late eminent writer of our own day, "Thus Origen wrote in the first part of the third century, and what was true between 200 and 250 A.D. must have been much more true between A.D. 33 and 70."—*Appendix I. to Sermons on the Interpretation of Prophecy*, by Thomas Arnold, D.D.

* Perhaps the wars recited in Dan. viii. and xi.

in Luke:—"And ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolks and friends, and some of you shall they cause to be put to death." (chap. xxi. 16.) See also Mark xiii. 12, where our Lord manifestly quotes from the 7th ch. of Micah; thus suggesting what we find remarkably confirmed by actual examination, that the Prophet refers to the same period. Again, Daniel seems to have it in view in those emphatic words:—"And they that understand among the people," (a class answering we may judge to our Lord's early disciples,) "shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days." (Dan. xi. 33.) Surely we have, in all these references, an equivalent utterance to the purport of the second seal.

Ver. 5. *And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast (living creature) say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse.*] The colour, here, denotes famine. Thus, we read in the book of Lamentations, in reference to this visitation upon the children of Zion:—"The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst; the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills. For the punishment of the iniquity of

the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her. Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire." Then comes,—“Their visage is *blacker than a coal*; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones.” Lam. iv. 4—8. Thus the black horse is suggestive of famine. And as we have found the import of the preceding seals, concerning the going forth of the Antichrist, and the outbreak of universal war, exactly paralleled in our Lord’s prophecy on the Mount; so here, answering to this third seal, He declares, “There shall be *famines*.” Indeed, the two series of predictions, as we shall see, coincide all through with remarkable precision.

And he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.] It is to be observed that the word which is translated here, “a pair of balances,” occurs several times in the New Testament; and, as the sense requires, is invariably translated “*yoke*.”* But the former translation is frequently given to it in the Septuagint,† as well as in profane authors; and such translation in this case, is not

* See Mat. xi. 29, 30; Acts xv. 10; Gal. v. 1; 1 Tim. vi. 1.

† See Lev. xix. 36; Job xxxi. 6; Psalm lxii. 9; Prov. xi. 1, xvi. 11; Isaiah xl. 12, 15, xlvi. 6; Amos viii. 5.

only more congruous with the vision before us, but is absolutely required to give sense to the predicate of the proposition, “*in his hand.*” For a *yoke* is not thus portable; whereas a *pair of balances* is. Indeed, the yoke (*ζυγος*) of primitive times, being simply a double collar of wood, into which two animals’ necks were put to make them work *evenly*, the term came naturally to be applied to a pair of balances, the beam of which equally draws up the suspended weights.

Ver. 6. *And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts (living creatures) say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny.*] This cry from the throne, or midst of the four living creatures, is a further key to the import of the vision, as already explained; for it proclaims what may be well called a famine-price for the necessaries of life, as appears from the well authenticated fact that the *chænix* of wheat, the measure, to which allusion is here made, was one man’s daily allowance,* and the penny, or denarius, his daily hire. (See Mat. xx. 2.) If, then, the whole of the labourer’s wages are adequate to provide but a bare meal for himself, irrespective of lodging and subsistence for his family, we may at once estimate the scarcity that must characterize

* Hence, in ancient times, to eat of one’s bread was expressed as ‘*a partaking of his chænix;*’ and the caring only for to-days’ bread was called, proverbially, ‘*a caring for one’s chænix.*’

the period referred to. Indeed, contrasted with former times, this price of provisions is enormous ; for the coin in question used to procure sixteen and twenty measures, instead of one of wheat, or three of the inferior grain—barley, as here mentioned.

And see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.]
At first sight, this proclamation of immunity to what may be comparatively called the luxuries of life, may appear dissonant to the tone of the preceding cry ; and as though contradicting its import of judgment. But, on reflection, surely we must rather regard it as an aggravation of such visitation, that while the staple food of mankind is wanting, there is no lack of that which is really dispensable. It may also be a special retribution upon the luxurious habits of the latter day. Inordinate appetency after superfluities of diet may thus be made to recoil upon a degenerate community, by their being shut up to the use of those creatures of God which they had abused. Just as, we know, Israel of old, for their unduly lusting after the fare of animal food, were left to feed on it to loathing, till it came out of their nostrils. Num. xi. 19, 20.

It may be well to add here, that the estimate of the chœnix in the foregoing interpretation of the third seal, is that which is given, without doubt,

in our common Greek Lexicons, the compilers of which, it may be presumed, had no other object in view than to explain the import of the term before them. And even the Rev. E. B. Elliott, in his *Horæ Apocalyplicæ*, prefaces his elaborate argument to the contrary, by the admission that “were the Attic (*i. e.*, the common) *chœnix* the measure intended, the fact of the market price of wheat being a denarius for the *chœnix* *would indicate a state of famine.*”* But it is to be observed, that after characterizing this the prevailing opinion about the size of the *chœnix* as a mere assumption, and affecting utterly to overthrow it; the same writer, in a succeeding edition of his work, actually adopts it. Of course, then, the reader is ready to conclude that according to his own acknowledgment of the bearing of this point on the interpretation of the vision, Mr. Elliott has now decided on famine being that which it imports. But not so, simple reader. The prophecy of a famine would not fit in with this writer’s predetermined fulfilment of the seals in the history of the decline of the Roman empire. Therein he says there is nothing “correspondent with such æra of famine.”† How, then, it may be asked, does he still contrive to neutralize the obvious import of this part of the vision, which, so far, he had pronounced to be indicative of famine? The mode is indeed worthy

* *Horæ Apocalyplicæ*, vol. i. p. 149.

† vol. i. p. 153.

of notice, as illustrating the way in which prophecy, figuratively interpreted by ingenious men, has been, and may be, accommodated to their systems; and that blow as the wind of historical fact may, they can always spread a sail to catch it. Driven from the hypothesis, yea, the *proof*, as he insisted on it, of an extraordinarily sized chœnix being intended, Mr. Elliott betakes himself to the alternative of an *adulterated denarius*. Behold his words:—"I was not aware of this adulteration when printing my two former editions; and so resorted to a larger and more uncommon chœnix, in order to answer the statement of price in the prophecy."* Mr. Elliott had fixed upon an *equitable price* for provisions as called for by his adjustment of the vision to a particular period of Roman history; accordingly he now tells us (in simplicity of candour for which he is to be respected) that to make the prophecy fit that period, he *resorted* to the expedient of an uncommon chœnix; but this was in ignorance that a *better* expedient was available, which being discovered, he adopts it and abandons the former.

Now, I have not seen the edition of his work, in which to maintain the same foregone conclusion, he thus has recourse to the alternative of a depre-

* *Vindiciæ Horariæ*, or Twelve Letters to the Rev. Dr. Keith, by the Rev. E. B. Elliott, M.A. p. 161, note.—SEELEY'S, Fleet Street.

ciated *coin*, instead of an uncommon *measure*; and therefore, I cannot weigh the evidence adduced for his new position. But that evidence cannot possibly be more imposing, or more confidently advanced, than what he had before relied on, touching the *chænix*. And does not the discarding of the latter, now, by himself, tend to beget suspicion touching the validity of the former? At all events, it is plain from his own words, that he has in turn “*resorted to*” both positions; and that he would not have relinquished one if he had not the other to fall back upon.

As to the voice, “*hurt not the wine and the oil,*” which Mr. Elliott makes equivalent to the instruction wont to be issued to the Provincial Executive of the Roman Empire, and which he translates accordingly, ‘*wrong not in regard to the wine and the oil,*’ it is to be observed that the verb in question occurs in several similar visions of this book;* and as in the text before us, “*hurt*” is the rendering employed without the supply of any ellipsis. Nor in those visions does Mr. Elliott except to such rendering. Nay, he builds his arguments on it!

Another illustration of our Author’s procedure in his *Horæ Apocalyptiæ*, and presented by himself, with equal simplicity, is to be found in the preface to his second edition, wherein, under the

* See Rev. vii. 2, 3; ix. 4, 10, 19; xi. 5.

head of "Alterations of Historic Explanation," of which he advertizes his readers, he writes thus:— "One (alteration) is, that he now assigns a larger meaning (*so as classical antiquity, he finds, requires that he should*) to the symbol of the sword-giving in the second seal, than he gave it before."* Thus it is clearly implied that the alteration of interpretation in question has been elicited, not by the exigencies of the Apocalyptic text, but by those of *classical antiquity*. In fact, the truth peeps out here, as elsewhere, that Mr. Elliott has had an eye rather to the illustration of Roman history by the Apocalypse, than to the simple office of an interpreter; and so, it has been well and discriminatingly said of his elaborate work, that "it converts the Apocalypse into a mere Technica Memoria for Roman history." No doubt Mr. Elliott composed his work, unconscious that, under the bias of the *hypotheses* with which he set out, he was consulting for such a puerile end. As a godly man, of course he would shrink from thus perverting any word of God. But we know, that by men of undoubted piety the end is often so regarded as to prevent their seeing the questionableness of the means they use for attaining it. And so here, Mr. Elliott satisfied himself that a philosophical rehearsal of important history, from the first to the second coming of Christ, was the

* Horæ Apocalypticæ. Preface to the Second Edition, p. xxi.

end contemplated by God in giving us this book; and enamoured of the wisdom of this, he worked out his exposition accordingly. Hence, both figurative and literal interpretation are adopted by turns; and when these fail, the principle of “*allusive contrast*” is invented, whereby is brought out the very opposite of the meaning that is apparent—the writer all the while conscientiously believing that he is doing God service. Such is my honest conviction, and shared by many, concerning the *Horæ Apocalypticæ*; of which I trust the expression here will not be thought incompatible with the fullest acknowledgment of Mr. Elliott’s learning and piety.

Ver. 7, 8. *And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast (living creature) say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death.*] The word rendered “Death” is used frequently in the Septuagint for Pestilence, which sense, if adopted here, would still further manifest the coincidence already shown between the import of these visions, and our Lord’s prophecy in Matthew xxiv., who there speaks of “*pestilences*” being to prevail in the latter day, as well as wars and famines. (ver. 7.) But, such signification of the word would make this particular vision bespeak merely *another form* of death;

whereas, although this, also, may be intended to be conveyed in the following clause, it appears that the design of the Spirit here, is to *personify Death* as now going forth to reap his harvest, in the wake of the destructive agencies previously enumerated. They seem viewed as *sufferings* which he at length comes to close. He is accompanied, accordingly, by “hell,” or more properly, *Hades*, as the receptacle of the dead, into which he consigns his victims. See Prov. v. 5; Cant. viii. 6; Isa. v. 13, 14; Rev. i. 18; xx. 14, where, as here, Death and Hades are associated together to convey the full idea of the destruction of human life.

And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth.] Or rather, as the most recently amended text has it, “power was given to *Him*, namely, the rider on the horse; and as is more consistent with Jer. xv. 2, and Ezek. xiv. 21, which in their full reach of interpretation refer to the same period—‘over the fourth part of *the land*.’ This latter clause means either that the fourth part of the Jewish land shall be affected by the agencies described, collectively; or, which is more probable, that this proportion of the land shall be subjected to the operations of each judgment, severally,—an infliction, tantamount to the devastation of the whole land.

To kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death,

and with the beasts of the earth.] It is to be observed that the word “*kill*” here denotes the taking away of life by formal execution; as if in contrast with the word used in verse 4,—“*kill* one another,” which rather implies massacre by sudden violence. And now it would seem, as already hinted, that not merely war and famine will do the work of Death, but there will also be let loose upon the earth, *pestilence*, and devouring beasts. I here admit the word *pestilence* instead of “death,” (although having excepted to its equivalence in the foregoing clause) because of the incongruity being now to be avoided of Death killing by death; and also, that in contradistinction from other defined modes of death, as here, *thavatos* has always the acceptance of pestilence.* This, moreover, harmonizes with the rendering of the word in one particular place, to which the judgments enumerated here seem obviously to refer. (See Ezek. xiv. 12—21. Septuagint translation.) And the adoption of such rendering in this vision is all that is wanted to identify the number and character of the judgments foreboded in both prophecies. By these means, then, God’s “four sore judgments,” as they are called, †—one making way, it may be, for the other in a sort of natural order,—war occasioning

* See 2 Sam. xxiv. 13, 15, 1 Kings viii. 37; Psalm lxxviii. 50; Jer. xiv. 12, xxi. 5.

† Ezekiel xiv. 21.

famine ; famine, pestilence : and all combining by the depopulation of the earth, to encourage the increase and ferocious instincts of wild beasts,*—the avenging day of the Lord will run its course.

Ver. 9. *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain.*] This reveals to us the fact, that amidst the wide-spread judgments which will be inflicted upon the earth, under the foregoing seals, the persecution and death of God's faithful servants—and that *because of* their faithfulness—will not be wanting. Their *souls*, accordingly, which man could not kill, are represented as under the altar, (*i. e.*, the altar of burnt offering) for there the blood (which was the life) of the sacrifices of old, was wont to be poured out, according to God's command. "The priest," we read, "shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." Lev. iv. 7, 18.

For the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.] This expresses the precise cause of their martyrdom, their adherence to God's precious truth ; especially, doubtless, to the truth communicated in this book, for its contents are defined, as we have already seen,† in almost the

* See Exodus xxiii. 29 ; 2 Kings xvii. 25 ; Lev. xxvi. 21, 22 ; Deut. xxxii. 24 ; Jer. v. 5, 6, xv. 1—3 ; Isaiah xxx. 6.

† See on chap. i. ver. 2, 9. page 6, 30.

very words here employed. As to the class to which this martyred company belong, we may judge from the character thus given to them, which is the same as that in chap. xii. 17,* that they belong to a Jewish election gathered subsequently to the translation of the present Church.

Ver. 10. *And they cried with a loud voice.*] Thus, in Gen. iv. 10, it is said that the voice of Abel's blood *cried unto God from the ground.*

How long, O Lord.] Literally, *until when?* The words are the same that are used in the Septuagint translation of Psalm xiii. 1, 2, lxxix. 5, and, indeed, all through the Psalms. The original word here is not that usually translated "*Lord.*" In reference to the Saviour, it occurs in very few places; perhaps, undoubtedly, only in 2 Pet. ii. 1, besides the present passage. It is literally, *Master*, and its correlative is servant. (See 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2; Tit. ii. 9; 1 Pet. ii. 18.) The use of it here seems to comport with the standing occupied by Jewish worshippers. See Luke ii. 29; Acts iv. 24. See page 4.

Holy and true.] These titles are assumed by our blessed Lord in His address to the Church in Philadelphia, Rev. iii. 7, and specially belong to Him, it would appear, in His covenant relation to

* See pp. 65—69.

the Jewish people. (See p. 207.) Hence they are naturally ascribed to Him by these martyrs.

Dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth.] This is, evidently, a cry for vengeance on their enemies ; and the tenor of it abundantly confirms what has been just thrown out touching the *Jewish* character and position of these saints, for such cry does not suit the calling of God's saints under this dispensation. God is *gracious* to His enemies now, and He expects His people to be the same ; if their enemies hunger, to feed them ; if they thirst, to give them drink. (Rom. xii. 19—21.) 'To cry for vengeance, therefore, is utterly incompatible with their calling. But, when the day of grace, concurrent with our dispensation, shall have ended ; and when God shall return with favour to His people—the Jews, and bring them once more on the stage of the world, as witnesses of his kingly power over them, and expectants of their long promised inheritance trodden down by the nations ; *then* will this cry, analogous as it is to the tone of so many of the Psalms which relate to the same period, be seasonable and consistent.* In connexion, too, with such future circumstances, we find our blessed Lord putting His sanction upon it in the prophetic parable

* “ if it be lawful to war for the destruction of enemies, why may it not be lawful both to wish and to pray for it ? ”—*Daily Scripture Readings*, by the late REV. DR. CHALMERS, vol iii. p. 124.

of the importunate widow.* To pause upon this parable, and thoroughly examine it on this important point, may not be unprofitable to the reader.

It is commonly supposed, I am aware, that this parable relates to the Church; and that the Lord Jesus is teaching the saints of this dispensation that they should pray always for His coming; for I shall suppose that the parties who make this application of the parable, discern that it is not prayer in general which it inculcates; but special prayer, in reference to the Lord's second advent, of which He had spoken in the 17th chapter. I must contend, however, that even with this discernment in the right direction, such is not the strict interpretation of the parable. In the first place, it does not suit the calling of the Church; for the Church is not a *Widow*. We read, indeed, of the widowhood of the Jewish people,† but not of the Church. The Church is spoken of as espoused to Christ, that she may be presented a chaste virgin to Him at His coming.‡ She has not yet, therefore, become *the wife*, so as to admit of her being a widow. And, besides, the petition put into the Widow's mouth here, comports not with the *graciousness* which is enjoined on the Church; for her cry to the judge is, "*Avenge me of my adversary;*" and no child of God, under this

* Luke xviii. 1—8.

+ Isaiah liv. 4, 5; Lam. i. 1.

‡ 2 Cor. xi. 2.

dispensation, can present such a petition at the throne of grace. Now is the time, I repeat, for God's exhibition of *grace* to *His* enemies; and He expects His children to observe the same towards *their's*. In this way they are to resemble their Father in heaven;* and touching the delay of the Lord Jesus in His coming again,—that event for which every believer must long,—we are enjoined to account the long-suffering of God, in this matter, to be for *salvation*,†—(the salvation of those who are now His and our enemies); and on this account, instead of being impatient of His delay, we are to be reconciled to it. Therefore, it is plain, the interpretation of this parable cannot apply to the Church under this dispensation. To what, then, does it apply? To see this we must go as far back as the 20th verse of the 17th chapter. We there learn that our Lord was demanded of the Pharisees, “when the kingdom of God should come,”—that is, the kingdom which the Prophets had predicted, in which God was to have the ascendancy, ruling over men in the person of Messiah; and in which kingdom the Jewish nation was to have the pre-eminence. The Pharisees, indeed, were intent merely upon their own aggrandizement in this kingdom, not caring for God's glory at all. Still, the Lord Jesus, in replying to their enquiry, denies not the fact that there would be such a

* Mat. v. 45.

† 2 Pet. iii. 15.

kingdom ; but simply says, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,” or, “outward show,” as the margin has it. (ver. 20.) The meaning of the original will be best appreciated by comparison with Mark iii. 2. It is there said, “they,” (the Pharisees) “watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day.” This word, *watched*, is the same that occurs here, only, in the verbal form. Again ; in Acts ix. 24, we read, the Jews “*watched* the gates day and night,” to kill Saul. It is still the same word which is used. Giving, then, this rendering to it here, instead of “observation,” the answer of our Lord runs thus,—‘The kingdom of God cometh not with *watching* ;’ that is, so as to admit of being watched for ; as though by mere outward phenomena men might be *signalled* into a due reception of it. “Neither,” he adds, “shall they say, Lo here, or Lo there,” (by way of pointing to the place of its appearance) “for behold the kingdom of God is within,” or rather, “*among* you,” as it is given in the margin. (ver. 21.) For, let us observe, the Lord Jesus, as the Messiah, the great Head of the kingdom, was now actually among these Pharisees, and yet they recognised Him not. To this end, they needed to be born from above, as He had said to Nicodemus.* And so would it be in regard to the glory of the kingdom by and bye ;—without the exercise of spiritual

* Compare John iii. 3, with Mat. xvi. 16, 17.

discernment, it would come upon men unawares; they would not be able to descry it beforehand, so as to be prepared for it. Such is our Lord's reply to the Pharisees, suited to the carnal spirit which they betrayed. Then the Lord Jesus turns to *the disciples*,—parties of a very different temper, be it remembered, to those cavillers,—and proceeds: “The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and shall not see it. (ver. 22.) These disciples were Jews, and, as believing Jews, longed for Messiah's glorious coming and kingdom; and of course, when persecution threatened them, they would long for such event still more. Accordingly, the Lord hereby intimates, that so great would be the persecution to which they should become exposed, that they would desire even *one* of the days of the Son of man,—*one* brief experience, as it were, of His mighty interposition in their behalf; and yet, they would desire in vain, so protracted would be their suffering. Hence, also, their greater need of the caution that follows:—“And they,” (*i. e.*, the mass of the nation amongst whom the suffering remnant will be) “shall say to you, see here, or see there: go not after them, nor follow them.” (ver. 23.) They were to be thus wary against the deception of false Christs. They were not to repair with the crowd to any place of assignation; either chamber, in the temple, or

mountain, in the wilderness. "For," on the contrary, our Lord announces, "as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day." (ver. 24.) Thus suddenly should the great event take place, of which counterfeit anticipations would be presented to deceive the unwary. "But first," continues our Lord, "must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation; (ver. 25.) for, although the disciples had been so long under the Lord's instruction, they yet needed to be reminded, again and again, of the doctrine of His humiliation.

Then He proceeds to compare the circumstances of His second coming with those of the flood, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. How did the flood find mankind when it took place? "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark." (ver. 27.) Again; how did the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah find their inhabitants? "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus," adds our Lord, "shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (ver. 28—30.) The antitype of Noah and of Lot—the little remnant who will be gathered

out from the apostate Jews, in Jerusalem, shall be housed, as it were, from the storm; and, when they are safe, *then*, just as judgment was poured out upon the wicked of old, so will it come upon Jerusalem, and its guilty inhabitants. And, now instructions are given to this favoured remnant:—

“In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop,” (it may be for prayer, like Peter. Acts x. 9.) “and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field,” (it may be for devout meditation, like Isaac. Gen. xxiv. 63.) “let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot’s wife.” (ver. 31, 32.) When Lot’s wife was leaving Sodom, her heart, as we can conceive, going after her possessions there, she “looked back;” and so she was made a monument of God’s wrath, being turned into a pillar of salt. This fact, the remnant are then to remember, by way of caution; yea, not only are they to sit loose to their possessions, but also to their very lives; for our Lord adds:—“Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.” (ver. 33.) Next come minute details of that eventful crisis. “I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken,” (*received* out of the devoted city), “and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken,” (*received*) “and the other left. Two men shall be

in the field ; the one shall be taken," (*received*) "and the other left." (ver. 34—36. The word which is here supplied as equivalent to "taken," is a common rendering of the original in the New Testament. It occurs, for instance, in the Gospel by St. John, where our Lord says, "I will come again and *receive* you unto myself." John xiv. 3. "And they answered and said unto him, (*i. e.*, the disciples who heard him speak,) "Where, Lord?" that is, where shall this discriminating judgment take place? "And he said unto them. Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." Thus, our Lord's answer to their enquiry is given in terms relating to His own coming ; for, in Mat. xxiv., it is in immediate connexion with His description of this event, that these identical terms are used :—"As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Under this expressive figure of eagles pouncing upon their prey, is manifestly represented the sudden appearing of Christ and His saints in the clouds of heaven, to the discomfiture of the assembled nations, and the apostate ones in Jerusalem ; when, also, He will send forth His angels to gather together His elect (the scattered remnant of Jews) from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other.

This will be still more intelligible by a reference to Malachi,* where, observe, first, the description given us of the state of the Jewish people in general at this time:—"Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord: yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." Because of the longsuffering and forbearance of God, the wicked faction in league with the Antichrist, will be seen to prosper to that degree, and to have such impunity attending their evil doings, that the mass of the returned nation will cease to respect the ordinances of God. But what will characterize the little faithful remnant?—"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." Thus, the little remnant, in their unavoidable association with the ungodly, will think of God's name; and, in mutual exhortation, will speak often one to another. And now we have the Lord's gracious promise to them:—"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord

* Chap. iii. 13—18.

of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." If a man saw fire ready to seize upon his house, in which his jewels were deposited, would he not take pains to rescue them? So, then, will the Lord estimate and preserve His remnant of faithful disciples, amidst the retribution that awaits apostate Israel, in their land. Again; He says, "And I will spare him, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him;" so that the emblem of the Lord's care for them, is not only the regard which a man feels for his treasure, but that which he feels for his very child, and that a dutiful child. The Prophet proceeds:—"Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." Now, here is a confirmation of the signification assigned to the word "*taken*," in the Gospel,—that it means reception into some place of the nature of an asylum, or refuge.* This is implied, here, in what is said of the preserved remnant, that they shall "*return*," when, in the burning up of the ungodly, root and branch,—for such is the judgment that will have ensued—they will, at length, see the vindication of the truth, that "verily there is a reward for the righteous, there is a God that judgeth the earth."

The same crisis is referred to in Isaiah iv.,

* See also Rev. xii. 6.

which answers to the parable of the tares, (which last should be interpreted, in like manner, in connection with the Jews in the latter day):—“And it shall come to pass, that he that is *left in Zion*, and he that *remaineth* in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem;”—that is, the survivors of that eventful time, who will people the city and land; *they* shall be holy, sanctified to God. And what is the note of that time? It is added:—“When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.” Thus it is implied that the judgment that shall come upon the land in that day, will be a judgment of burning; and they who, returning with the Lord, shall be left to occupy it, afterwards—the righteous gathered into the barn,—*they* shall constitute the nucleus of the saved nation.

In reference, then, to the suffering and expectant position of this remnant, represented by the disciples now addressed, and to encourage them in the extremity thus foretold, it follows:—“And he spake a parable unto them, that men”* (or, rather, that *they*, the disciples to whom this is a continuous address) “ought always to pray, and

* The word “*men*” is not in the original.

not to faint.” We must connect this especially with what is said in the 22nd verse of the previous chapter:—“The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.” Thus, for a time, their petition will not be granted; nevertheless, hereby, the Lord teaches them to continue instant in prayer, for the happy consummation of their hopes. But, now at length, what is the parable? “There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city.” The foregoing context is a sufficient index that Jerusalem must be the city contemplated, where, according to the supplementary information of Rev. xi., marvellous scenes will yet take place, making it to rival Sodom and Gomorrah in idolatry and sensuality, for which cause, also, it would appear, it is said to be *spiritually** called by their names. Rev. xi. This circumstance, moreover, is conformable, as we have seen, to the description of the faithful remnant of its inhabitants, under the typical character of Lot. The same party is here set forth under the aspect of a widow. To the whole Jewish nation indeed, this affecting relationship belongs; and, therefore, we read among the blessings in store for them, when Messiah comes

* That is, so denominated *by the Spirit* in the Old Testament Scriptures. See Isa. i. 10; Ezek. xvi. 26, 46; xx. 7.

again, that “the reproach of their *Widowhood*”* shall not be remembered any more. But, alas! in league with the Antichrist, the mass of the nation will, like Babylon, affect the *Queen* rather than the *Widow*; and it is only the remnant who will realize this condition before God.

The remaining actor in the parable, the Widow’s “*Adversary*,” is, evidently, filled up in the Antichrist, who persecutes this remnant in Jerusalem. And as the Widow betook herself to the local judge, that he might right and vindicate her against her oppressor, so will this persecuted remnant lift up their cry to God for vengeance against the Antichrist; and their very words, at this crisis, we may regard as supplied to us in the Psalms. For example, Ps. lxxix.:—“Oh God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them,”—ver. 1—3. This plainly alludes to the desecration of the holy city and temple, and the slaughter and exposure of the dead bodies of the witnesses, depicted in Rev. xi. And then comes the plaintive

* Isaiah liv. 4.

note :—“ How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry ; for ever ? shall thy jealousy burn like fire ? ” (ver. 5.) Again, we read, in Psalm xciv., “ O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth ; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself. Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth : render a reward to the proud. Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph ? How long shall they utter and speak hard things ? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves ? ” As the cry of this suffering remnant continues, the moral of the Lord’s dealing with them is pronounced :—“ The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law ; That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.” (ver. 11—13.) And so, while the answer to their prayer is delayed, they will yet be enabled to hold on and wait upon God ; just as the poor Canaanitish mother, whose cry, in the days of His flesh, the Lord Jesus appeared not to recognise, was yet sustained in persevering faith till the moment for blessing arrived. To the same effect may be consulted Isaiah lxiii., from ver. 15, and chap. lxiv., overlooking the division of the chapters. Here, again, amidst doleful lamentations of the evil case to which the remnant are reduced, there is a spirit of triumphant confi-

dence in God, that in due time He will appear to the discomfiture of their adversaries. Nor need we doubt but that, in that day of need, the argument of this parable will contribute its supporting influence.

Let us now weigh its force. The judge to whom the widow is represented as having recourse, is one that “feared not God, neither regarded man;” and, for a while, he would not interfere; but afterwards, he says within himself, “*though I fear not God, nor regard man*, yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.” To this tardy and extorted exercise of the functions of an unjust judge, the Lord Jesus directs attention:—“Hear what the unjust judge saith.” And then he exultingly exclaims, “and shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?” (*i. e.*, keep them long in suspense.) “I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.” But the truth did not allow our Lord to close with this tone of exultation in the Divine faithfulness. He adds a note indicative of disappointment in reserve for Him:—“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith” (*i. e.* the faith He had been inculcating in reference to His coming) “on the earth,” or it may be in *the land*—the Jewish land. For, just as at the first advent of Christ, there was a sad

exhibition of degeneracy, even among the disciples, who, when the hour of trial came, “all forsook him and fled;” so it will be at the period of His second advent; though grace will then be shown to comfort and to bless the little remnant.

This brief exposition of the parable, although somewhat of a digression, will not, it is trusted, prove unacceptable to the reader. It may serve to shew the connexion, little appreciated by many, between the Old Testament Prophets and the Gospels, as well as between both these and the Apocalypse. But, while I submit the whole parable to be apposite to our present subject, I invite particular notice to the prominent feature of it already glanced at,—the sanction which it clearly gives, by implication, to invocations of vengeance on persecuting enemies; a feature which at once determines that it belongs to another dispensation than the present. To the circumstances of such dispensation, then, I conceive, we ought to transfer the interpretation of the analogous language uttered in this vision, reasonably concluding that it is from Jewish martyrs it emanates, after our dispensation shall have closed, and the thread of the Divine dealings with the earthly people—the Jews, is again resumed.* I am aware of the efforts that have been made to reconcile this language with the calling and position of the

* See Apocalyptic Interpretation, by the Author. p. 50.

present Church of God, by abstracting from it all personal emotion towards enemies, and making it either a sort of ecclesiastical denunciation, or a mere form of prophecy. But the good men who have been betrayed into these efforts, as they have embarked in them from inadequate knowledge of dispensational truth; so, in following them out, they have unwittingly imparted the aspect of orthodoxy to one of the most unchristian dogmas of the Church of Rome; for, certainly, if the use of imprecatory denunciations belong to the Church at all, the Church of Rome, by her doctrine of Ecclesiastical excommunication, and prosecution of heretics, shews more plausible pretensions to it than any other body. Witness the following pleading on the subject of the imprecations in the Psalms, by an organ of the Romish press:—

“ Here, then, is the ground for these terrible imprecations, we find in the Psalms. turn them how you will, call them prophecies, or what not, evade the plain and natural use of the optative forms in Hebrew, as you please, still there is an evident exultation in the destruction of the wicked, which sorts ill with that theory of Christianity which makes benevolence the sum and substance of it, as much as atheists have made it the sum and substance (so to say) of God’s character. Yet, somehow or other, the Psalms have been used in the Church in all ages more than any

one part of Holy Writ. They are more quoted in the New Testament than even Isaiah is, and more in the Fathers than any part of the Old Testament. A Church which believes herself gifted with infallibility in thus acting, acts naturally. It is natural for her to anathematize heresy (and heretics too, if obstinate), and therefore natural to mould her spirit upon a book, which, while it is replete with all that is tender in devotion, yet savours of the King as well as the Penitent, and nerves the heart against bearing the sword entrusted to her in vain. If David was a penitent, so was Peter; if David was a king, Cephias also had not a priesthood only, but a *Royal Priesthood*. The anathemas of the *Church* then, are a counterpart to the imprecations in the Psalms, the spiritual sword to the material sword of David, and heretics to the crafty enemies. Even the indiscreet use of the material sword, which Simon made before he was converted, did not make God bid him throw it away, but put it up into its sheath, which seems to convey some intimation as to the right use of the spiritual sword. It is by hearing that faith comes, and the sword is not given to the Church to deprive men of the very organs of conversion, but to cut them off from the people of God after they have refused to be converted. ‘A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid, (St. Paul

says,) *knowing* that he that is such, is subverted and sinneth, being condemned by his own judgment.' Tit. iii. 10, 11. It is somewhere mentioned by St. Ephrem, as a characteristic of certain heretics that they are unwilling to anathematize; yet this anathematizing spirit, so Catholic, though so often condemned by Latitudinarians, and regarded with so much reasonable apprehension by them, really is perfectly odious when severed from other portions of the Christian character, of which it forms a part only. Outside the Church, people contemplate the Christian character as an object at a distance and external to themselves and so misjudge of it. Without faith it is impossible to anathematize, and faith is impossible out of the Church." . . . Again, "The xxxv. Psalm, the lxix., and cix., will furnish specimens of the way in which the humble spirit of one who trusts in God may be blended with the strongest imprecations against the wicked. From the latter we may cite the following words. 'Let it (cursing) be unto him like a garment which covereth him, and like a girdle with which he is girded continually. . . . But thou, O Lord, do with me for thy name's sake, because thy mercy is sweet. Do thou deliver me, for I am poor and needy, and my heart is troubled within me.'"*

* Dublin Review, October, 1847.

From the foregoing extracts, let Christian writers, who interpret such Scriptures as have been adduced, and, among them, this cry, under the 5th seal, of the saints of this dispensation, see, whither their principle leads. At all events, be it observed, by the reader, that the only method whereby Scripture can be protected from the perversion which is ever ready to be employed against it, is *rightly dividing it*, i.e., putting its several contents under their respective dispensations.

Ver. 11. *And white robes were given unto every one of them.*] This is the encouraging answer to the foregoing cry. It is a significant assurance of the sure association of these martyred ones with the Lord Jesus, on the honour and glory of His kingdom, when the time comes; for thus it is promised:—"they shall walk with me in white." (Rev. iii. 4.) And, again, we read:—"And the armies...in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." Rev. xix. 14.

And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.] At the precise time to which this vision points, the slaughter of the Jewish believers in question will be going on (see Ps. xliv. 22); and those

already slain are here advertised that when the appointed number of their brethren (*i.e.*, Jews, and fellow servants, believing Jews, who are destined to Martyrdom) is accomplished—then, the righteous retribution invoked should surely take place.

Ver. 12. *And I beheld, when he had opened the sixth seal.*] Before entering upon the consideration of this seal, it is well to apprise the simple-minded reader, who may not be aware of it, that nearly all our popular commentators have combined to adjust the whole series to past history, and this amongst the rest, notwithstanding its marked and apparently unmistakeable reference to the great crisis of the world, which is yet future. Having, by the exercise of varied ingenuity, adjusted the other seals to suit their system of interpretation, commentators have not shrunk from attempting the same with this; but most anomalous are the results, as we shall see by comparing one school of writers with another. For example, according to the decision of some, this seal was fulfilled when Christianity was established in the fourth century by Constantine the Great.* According to others, it was fulfilled in the last century, by the subversion of Christianity in the neighbouring kingdom of France, at the epoch of the great Revolution.† What extraordinary discrepancy

* Mede, Newton, Elliott. † Cunninghame.

and contradiction here, both in regard to the time and character of the event! Yet these are the interpretations which prevail, and few lay to heart the disparagement which ensues to the Prophetic word from having such equivocal fulfilments ascribed to it; surpassing, as they do, in this respect, any thing that is related of the heathen oracles of old.

Ver. 13—17. *And, lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains: And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?]* Every expression here combines to indicate the occurrence of physical convulsions and phenomena throughout our planetary system, so that it may be well asked of him who is doubtful on the point, How could the Holy Ghost desig-

nate such palpable realities, if He intended them in other language? Moreover, it is remarkable, that where these realities are *confessedly* predicted, the recital runs after this manner. Let us refer for example to the prophet Joel. "And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." (Joel ii. 30, 31.) Here are obviously some of the very prodigies mentioned in the sixth seal, and these are admitted by all parties to have a literal signification.

Again, in our Lord's prophecy on the Mount, where, as we have already seen, the import of the visions under the seals is expanded into verbal recital, we read: "immediately after the tribulation of those days," (that is, the tribulation yet to come upon the Jews in their land) "shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." (Matt. xxiv. 29.) This prediction, of the literal import of which there is no doubt, corresponds with the representation of the seal under consideration. But, how, the reader may well enquire, have commentators evaded the force of this parallelism of description, which so obviously points to the one tremendous scene which is yet to be

enacted? It is very remarkable that it is by adopting another erroneous position, namely, that by such description, in the way of grand imposing imagery, mere political and religious revolutions are wont to be set forth in other scriptures; that, therefore, a metaphorical interpretation may be assigned to it here, admitting of application to the comparatively ordinary events, which these writers respectively adopt. But let us turn to the Scriptures adduced, and we shall find, on the contrary, that they relate to the *very same portentous period of the second advent*.

And first, the 13th of Isaiah has to be vindicated. The chapter begins, let us observe, with this emphatic title, "The burden of Babylon." Now has Babylon yet fallen under the burden in question? By no means. It is true Babylon did exist in former times, the enemy of God's people Israel, and, in the course of centuries, it gradually declined into its present condition of ruin.* But the word

* "If it be edifying" writes the late Dr. Arnold, "to believe that God's prophecies have their sure and adequate fulfilment, that is a belief which so far from shaking I would earnestly labour to encourage and confirm. Nay, farther, if it be edifying to believe that they have in some instances their minute and literal, as well as their large and substantial fulfilment, this too I do not deny, but fully allow, *only it seems to me to be dangerous to rest too much upon these as on the great fulfilment*

of God certifies us that it will be revived again to perform its part in the wonders of the latter day.

of prophecy, lest we should be shocked and our faith be troubled if in any case they are not to be found."* With such prefatory note of caution, the learned writer appends the following historical summary relative to Babylon, from the time of its conquest by Cyrus.

“The capture of Babylon by Cyrus took place in the year 538 before the Christian æra. But a hundred years afterwards, when Herodotus visited Babylonia, the city was still populous, and the surrounding country was the richest in the Persian empire. Nearly forty years later, when Xenophon followed the youngest Cyrus in his expedition against his brother Artaxerxes, Babylon was still a great city, and the canals which communicated † between the Euphrates and Tigris were in good repair, and navigated by corn barges. Seventy-five years afterwards the same state of things still existed: when Alexander entered Babylon after the battle of Arbela, he found the temples indeed in ruins, ‡ but the Chaldean priests still inhabited the city as formerly, and it was still a great and wealthy capital. Alexander, as is well known, ordered the temples to be restored, and planned the construction of a great harbour or wet dock in the Euphrates, with the intention of making Babylon the centre of commerce between the west and the Indian ocean. His early death prevented the accomplishment of his purpose; and

* “Sermons on the Interpretation of Prophecy,” p. 414, by the late Rev. Dr. Arnold.

† Xenophon Anabasis, i. 7. sec. 15.

‡ Arrian, iii. 16. vii. 16. et seqq.

And it is in the contemplation of this great city, as it will be, that the Prophet here speaks, denouncing

afterwards the foundation of Sileucia* on the Tigris, which was the capital, first of the Greek Syrian kings, and afterwards of those of Parthia, drew away the population from Babylon, and caused it gradually to fall into decay. In the Augustan age, more than five hundred years after its conquest by Cyrus, it was † still partially inhabited; but a hundred and fifty years later, in the time of the Antonines, Pausanias says ‡ that nothing was remaining of it except the walls and the temple of Belus.

“ This, however, appears to have been an exaggeration, or else it must have been peopled again at a subsequent period; for in the fourth century of the Christian æra, Ammianus Marcellinus, writing from his own personal knowledge of Mesopotamia and Assyria, classes § Babylon, Ctesiphon, and Selucia, together, as the three greatest and most famous cities of all that neighbourhood: he also speaks of the fertility of Assyria in the highest terms; describes the Euphrates || as divided into three branches, all of which were navigable, and as watering a highly cultivated country: and mentions in particular one branch that watered the heart of Babylonia ¶ “ tractus Babylonios interiores,” “ benefitting the lands and the surrounding cities.” Thus, during a period of more than eight hundred years from its conquest by Cyrus, Babylon existed as an inhabited

* Strabo, xvi. p. 738. + Diodorus, ii. 9. † Strabo, viii. 33.

§ Splendidissi mæ et pervulgatæ hæ solæ sunt tres. Ammianus, xxiii. p. 251. ed. Vales.

|| Ammianus, xxxii. pp. 250, 252.

¶ Id. xxiv. 266.

judgments upon it, exactly in accordance, moreover, with those threatened on the Babylon of the Apocalypse, which would appear, therefore, to any simple-minded reader, to be the same identical city. Now, let us read from the 9th verse:—
“Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon

city, and the country around it continued to be fertile and populous.”* Hereupon Dr. Arnold enquires—“Now shall we say that during all this time the historical sense of the prophecies concerning Babylon was not fulfilled, but that they waited for a still later period; and were only completely accomplished when Babylon fell into a state of utter ruin, and the country around it became a desert.” To this proposition, Dr. Arnold excepts, contending that the historical sense of the prophecy was sufficiently fulfilled, when the empire of Babylon fell, and the people became the subjects of another dynasty. But, it is plain from the tone of his question, and the foregoing induction of historical facts, that in the judgment of this learned writer, such a sudden destruction of Babylon, as the literal sense of the prophecy demands, cannot be argued as having already taken place.

* Notes to Sermons on the Interpretation of Prophecy, by the late Rev. Dr. Arnold.

shall not cause her light to shine." Then, again, at the 13th verse, which makes the parallelism with the sixth seal still more apparent:—"Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger." The condition, also, to which Babylon will then be reduced, is compared to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, which was effected, we know, by fire from heaven; and nothing like this is on record concerning Babylon as it was. Finally, what must remove all doubt of the futurity of these judgments, leaving them to happen at the period to which the sixth seal points, is, their marked connexion, by the Spirit, with the final restoration of the Jewish nation, whose triumph over the king of Babylon, as their oppressor, evidently identical with the Antichrist of the last days, hereupon ensues: "For," says the prophet, assigning the reason for Babylon's destruction, "the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land." (Isaiah xiv. 1.) They are not, therefore, figures of speech, that we have here, in reference to some Providential visitation already past, but literal prodigies which will affect the heavens and the earth; included, I contend, under the similar enumeration of the seal before us.

Another scripture appealed to, to justify the figurative interpretation of the language in

question, occurs in the 34th chap. of this same prophet, ver. 4:—"And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree." But here, again, let the reader observe how this announcement is introduced:—"Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood." Can this plain and (with the exception of the last sentence) severely literal description, bidding defiance to any figurative gloss, be applied to any past execution of Divine wrath? Surely not. Nor, with this view, need we fear to read on, as though the sequel indicates differently; and that all this must have had some figurative fulfilment in the desolation which has already befallen the land of Idumea. We shall see that here, as in the case of Babylon, the reference is to the future. In fact, what follows is a continuation of the same theme of the prophet:—"For my sword shall be bathed in heaven." This refers,

I believe, to the scene depicted in Rev. xii. 7, where it is said, “there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels.” Thus, the sword of Divine vengeance will first do its work upon the wicked Spirits that infest the heavenlies, (see Ephe. vi. 12) perhaps the same as “the host of high ones that are on high, (see Isaiah xxiv. 21); they shall be precipitated from their usurped vantage-ground in the ærial regions; the sword is therefore represented as bathed or *drunken* in heaven. This is the marginal translation of the same word in ver. 7. The prophet adds:—“behold it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse to judgment.” Now Idumea, like Babylon, has undergone judgment to a certain extent;* but

* Let us hear Dr. Arnold again:—“As far as relates to the historical Edom, the language here too is hyperbolic, nor can its fulfilment be insisted on farther than this, that while Israel continued to exist as a nation, Edom, like Amalek, and Ammon, and the other neighbouring people, gradually has perished out of history. But, since the recent discovery of the ruins of Petra, it has been contended that the desolate state of that country is a confirmation of the prophecies concerning Edom, that it should be laid waste for ever. To this, I think, the objections are two-fold; first, that it does not appear that Petra was ever regarded in the days of its greatness as an Edomite city, but as belonging to Arabia, and to

to see that Idumea is yet to revive, as it were, and be the scene of special vengeance, we have only to turn to the 63rd of this prophet, where we find celebrated the victorious march of the Lord Jesus as coming from Edom, having trodden the wine press of the wrath of God, and having the blood of his enemies sprinkled on his raiment. (ver. 1—3.) So that here, again, the introduction

the Arabian tribe of the Nabatœans ; and, secondly, that the splendour of Petra, as appears by the existing remains, belonged to a period long subsequent to the prophecies against Edom ; and it cannot surely be considered as an exact fulfilment of the severest denunciations of vengeance, that, after those denunciations, the country which was the object of them should rise to a degree of wealth and splendour far greater than it had ever known before ; that this prosperous condition should last for several centuries, and then should only yield to that common fate which has consigned so many cities of the East to utter desolation, after the dominion of the commerce to which they owed their greatness had been transferred elsewhere. The ruin of Petra has not been more complete than that of Palmyra.”*

The first reason given by this learned writer is sufficient for his point. As to the second, I must demur to its validity ; for it appears that when the ruin of Babylon was predicted by Isaiah, its glory and affluence were quite insignificant compared with what it attained to afterwards, ere it began to decline.

* Note to Sermons on the Interpretation of Prophecy.

of the same physical phenomena, in connexion with the judgment of Idumea, which are recited, under the sixth seal, need not be converted into metaphor, as though dissociated from the signs and wonders of the second advent, but must of necessity be applied to the same great crisis.

There remains but one more passage to consider, to relieve the language before us from the exhausting process of metaphorical interpretation. It is that which occurs in the Prophet Hosea: "The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us." Hos. x. 8. This refers, I submit, to the future retribution denounced upon the idolatry of Israel, of which, that under Jeroboam, was a type. We know, from the second chapter of Isaiah, that, on their return to their land, they will revel in this form of iniquity, and that consequent upon it, will be the breaking in on them of Divine wrath, when the "Lord ariseth to shake terribly the nations of the earth." So here, such will have been their career of iniquity, especially in its consummation in the latter day, that they, equally with the Antichristian host, will court any sudden judgment of death, rather than meet the eye of their incensed Judge. And this interpretation agrees with the quotation of the passage, in the

23rd chapter of Luke, where our blessed Lord applies it to the generation of Jews that will be in their land at His second advent :—“ Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.” v. 28. This, he says to the crowd of mourning women who accompanied him to His crucifixion. Then, at the 30th verse, quoting the language of Hosea, he adds :—“ Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us ; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry ? ” The meaning of this closing proverb, seems to be here, if the Jewish people at that period of comparative reformation from the gross enormities of their former history, could yet proceed to such an act of impiety, as they were about to perpetrate, what would not be their depth of iniquity, and ripeness for judgment, when their unblushing course of apostacy, under the Antichrist, would at length begin, and they be left to fill up the measure of their iniquity.

To this consideration, of the sixth seal comprising under it the several foregoing judgments contemplated in the Old Testament, and the Gospels, as evidenced by their association with the same concomitant phenomena, it is important to

add, that such phenomena are partially rehearsed under the fourth trumpet, and the seventh vial. For instance, under the former, we read of the sun, moon, and stars being affected; and under the latter, of a great earthquake, the issue of which is described almost in the same language as here. "Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." (ch. xvi. 20.) Hence, it appears that the sixth seal represents not a momentary visitation; but that herein is condensed into one vision what will be distributed over a period of time; the full burden, however, belonging to the crisis just prior to the Lord's appearing in the clouds of heaven. To confirm this view, we have further evidence from a comparison of our Lord's words, in the Gospels, with the utterance of the Prophet Joel; for, speaking of the phenomena in question, our Lord defines the time of their recurrence, as being "*in those days*," (Mark xiii. 24,) an expression significant of some continuous duration; and Joel speaks of them as being to take place "*before the great and terrible day of the Lord come*," (Joel ii. 31) referring, doubtless, to the winding up of that awful juncture. Again, another note of the time contemplated is given by our blessed Lord; when, as in the above passage of Mark, he enumerates these things as being to happen "*immediately after the tribulation of those days*," (i.e., the

unexampled tribulation to be undergone by the Jews in their land). Thus, He also, like Joel, seems to overpass the *initiatory* phases of these phenomena of the heavenly bodies, and to point especially to their consummated development at the last, when they shall usher in, as they will, His personal advent against His enemies. The sixth seal, be it observed, specifies not this final act of the solemn drama; but, like Isaiah, (ii. 19.) celebrates the overwhelming dismay which the apprehension of it awakens. The terrible shaking of the earth, and the disastrous portents in the heavens, combined, produce this effect. Fear and trembling seize hold of the stoutest heart; and the whole array of earth's royalty, valour, wealth, and obsequious followers, gathered together against Jerusalem, (for there it appears will be the place of muster,) invoke death in its most appalling form to overtake them, if only they may not be confronted with the face of the Divine Majesty now about to be revealed in the person of Jesus. But still, the dread event itself is here left to be imagined. Afterwards, it is disclosed, in Chap. xix, where, we find, this mighty host meeting it with very altered mien:—"I saw" says John, "the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army," (ver. 19.) Thus, it appears, they will have

recovered from the shock which just before affected them, amidst the physical convulsions of nature, and with daring front they at last rush on the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler.

The diversity of deportment assigned to the parties, in these two visions, has led some, in their interpretation, to place a wide interval between them; as though to allow time for such a change to ensue. But this is not called for. We know that, on the occasion of the ark of God being brought into the field of battle against the Philistines, amidst the clamorous shouting of Israel, a dreadful panic, for the moment, seized upon the Philistines, extorting from them the exclamation: "Woe unto us, for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness." (1 Sam. iv. 7, 8.) But, this was only a sudden impulse, and presently a desperate determination succeeded, inducing the rallying cry:—"Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight." (ver. 9.) Why, then, may not the transition from consternation to resistance be similar in the case of the Antichristian confederacy at the coming of our Lord?

Thus this sixth Chapter, to the close of which we have now come, presents to us a summary rehearsal of what will occur in the day of the Lord, up to the time of his actual appearing. The other visions which follow, are supplementary, filling up the details which have been here omitted. The parties whose lot shall be cast amidst such scenes, not to speak of the Jewish nation at large, and their Gentile oppressors, will be, *first*, a faithful remnant of the former, ignorant, it may be, of Jesus, but still with intelligent recognition of Moses and the Prophets, and resolute opposition to the Antichrist, longing for the coming of their glorious Messiah; *then*, further, a Jewish election, enlightened to know and believe in Jesus *as that Messiah*, and who, with this book of the Revelation especially addressed to them, will constitute the seven Churches of Asia. These both, will glorify the Lord in the fires, according to their respective standings before Him, whilst the husk of mere professing Christendom (the kernel—the real Church of God being gathered away to be with Jesus) will have become absorbed into the mass of apostacy, and infidelity around them.

All these things, then, are for us to know, not because they are incident to us, if we are believers; but because, as sitting in heavenly places with our glorious Head, it is our privilege to participate in His counsels, even as Abraham did when on the

mount with God—he had confided to him the Divine judgments which were impending over Sodom and Gomorrah. In fact, the saints of this dispensation, instead of being exposed to the tremendous visitations here rehearsed, will be administrators of them with Jesus their Lord. Still, as overhearers, through grace, of these things, we are exhorted to attend:—“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches.” And by our keeping in view the evil consummation which is at hand, and the Divine judgment reserved for it, no doubt we shall be better able to discern and avoid the symptomatic tendencies, which are at present working in our midst. Alas! that so much ignorance of the future prevails, when our God has so graciously spread it out before us. Oh! see to it Christian reader! that you grieve not the Comforter—the Revealer of things to come, by indifference to His warning voice. It tells you, you are “not of the night nor of darkness,” but “the children of the day;” so that when that day comes, of whose course this book advertizes you, you shall be amongst its *irradiators*. See 1 Thes. v. 4, 5. Be intelligent then, accordingly; “Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Eph. v. 17. Moreover, *walk* as children of the light, sanctified through the truth, using it as the *material* for communion with God, and the

regulation of your service unto Him. Thus will you afford the best vindication of the practical character of this book, and recommend it to your fellow-saints. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” John xiii. 17.

CHAPTER VII.

SECTION FIRST.

Verses 1—8.

1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*

5 Of the tribe of Juda *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Reuben *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Gad *were sealed twelve thousand.*

6 Of the tribe of Aser *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Nepthalim *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Manasses *were sealed twelve thousand.*

7 Of the tribe of Simeon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar *were* sealed twelve thousand.

8 Of the tribe of Zabulon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.

IN entering upon the consideration of this chapter, the Author cannot but remark how interesting to a *Jew*, would be the perusal of the New Testament in general, if unassociated in his mind with the accompanying comments which prevail in the Christian Church. For example, if the four Gospels were thus entertained by him, there can be little doubt but that his attention would be at once arrested by their contents; for, therein, he would see, in striking accordance with Old Testament prophecy, the procedure of Messiah as a minister of the circumcision addressing himself to *Jewish hopes*; and in no wise contravening but rather encouraging the expectation of the kingdom, and “the first dominion”* among the nations, as the portion of the daughter of Zion. But, alas! the Gospels come not before the Jew in this their genuine simplicity, but are encumbered by Gentile interpretations of the discourses, miracles, and parables of our Lord, which actually disallow the Jewish aspect of His ministry.

Nor has the book of the Revelation escaped the same treatment. In regard to the chapter before

See Micah iv. 8.

us, this deplorable spirit of Gentile monopoly is strikingly exhibited ; for, whereas it obviously relates to the literal seed of Abraham—and so we have a precise enumeration of the twelve tribes into which they were divided—our popular Commentators *will* have it, that this nomenclature belongs to the visible Church ; and that the sealing of a definite number out of every tribe, imports the preservation of the true servants of God, amidst the general corruption of Christianity which ensued upon its establishment throughout the Roman Empire by Constantine the Great !* Surely, in the face of such manifest, however undesigned, perversion of God's word, it ought to be our determination, more than ever, to sit loose to the traditions of men ; and to watch against that " licentious and deluding art," as has been well expressed, " which changeth the meaning of words, as alchemy doth or would do, the substance of metals, making anything of what it listeth, and bringeth, in the end, all truth to nothing."† The Bible is a book, let us remember, for the humble believer as well as the philosopher ; and the necessary element for the understanding of it is that which all equally need—the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And, of the terms which *He* employs, the best glossary is derived from the comparison of Scripture with itself.

* *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, by Rev. E. B. Elliott.

† Hooker.

Now, there is one word in the chapter before us, the import of which it is very necessary to determine, viz :—“ *Israel.*” It has been already remarked, that there is no authority for applying it to Gentiles, or the present Church. There is, however, a passage much relied on for the support of such notion, which, at first sight, may appear to favour it :—“ And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, *and upon the Israel of God.*” Gal. vi. 16. But a little consideration will shew that even this passage refers to the literal Israel. In writing to the Church of Galatia, the Apostle is delivering his judgment on the exemption of Gentile believers from the obligation of circumcision ; judaizing teachers having crept in, who inculcated the contrary. In doing this, he intimates, that, however circumcision might be practised by Jewish converts, as a token of the covenant which God made with their father Abraham ; yet, that for them or any of their Gentile brethren to observe this ordinance on the one hand, or to decline observing it on the other, as a ground of merit before God, was utterly vain. “ For,” he writes, “ in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”* He then dismisses the subject by the invocation in question : “ And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be

* Or, a new creation.

on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” Whereby we learn, not that the term Israel is a designation for all believers, (such a conclusion is quite gratuitous) but that *Jewish* believers would not be true Israelites, *i. e. the Israel of God*, if they observed not the Apostle’s precept. Nathanael, we know, being *a Jew* of an ingenuous and docile spirit, was commended by our blessed Lord as “*an Israelite indeed ;*” (John i. 47) and, in like manner, here, the *Jewish* members of the Church who would regulate their intercourse with their Gentile brethren after the principle laid down, are contemplated by the Spirit, as *the Israel of God*. This is the simple meaning of the verse, yielding no ground, it is contended, for giving the denomination “Israel” to any class of Gentiles.

Nor, be it further observed, is the kindred term “*Zion*,” ever applied in the Scriptures to designate the Church. In the epistle to the Hebrews, it is true, the Apostle says to believers, “ye are come unto Mount Zion,” (Heb. xii. 22,) but he speaks of their having equally come to the “heavenly Jerusalem,” which shews plainly that what the Apostle has in view, is the glorious vision of *the future*, when the literal Mount Zion, in juxta-position with the glory from heaven, will be the scene of the manifestation of the Lord’s kingdom in the latter day. This vision he supposes the believer to realize, even now, in

the exercise of that faith which “is the substance of things hoped for, the *conviction* (such ought to be the rendering of the original) of things not seen.” (Heb. xi. 1.) Thus, there is no more authority for denominating the Church—*Zion*, than *Israel*. It is merely a part of man’s system, which is, at once, exploded by examination of the Word of God.

With this consideration of Scripture phraseology in general, the chapter before us, under the head of the twelve tribes of Israel, cannot be supposed for a moment to refer to aught but the seed of Abraham, *the Jewish nation*. Alas! that so patent a truth should require to be vindicated. We now proceed to its exposition in detail.

Ver. 1. *And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.*] This is another instance of the ministration of angels, in connection with the providential government of God, as it will be exercised in the period of the Lord’s day, or the day of the Lord. We read, in Matt. xxiv. 31, that when the Lord Jesus appears in the clouds of heaven at His second advent, (the saints of the present dispensation, be it remembered, having been gathered to him before) then, amongst other things, “He shall send his angels, . . . and they shall gather

together his elect," (*i.e.* the spared Jews, who will constitute the restored nation) "from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Such is, as it were, the *final* scene of the rehearsal of Israel's fortunes; and *here* we look back to the *opening* scene, and descry the same parties, Israel and the angels: only, now, the latter, stationed at the four corners of the earth,* as though ready to fold it up like a vesture, are employed in holding in the ordained agencies of judgment; while, meantime, a first fruits of the former are being discriminated and sealed for preservation, when the judgment bursts forth. In the one scene, we have presented to us, the *consummation* of the Divine purpose, the chosen nation collected; in the other, we have the *process* rehearsed, which gives a happy augury of it.

Ver. 2. *And I saw another angel ascending from the east.*] This is a commissioner of mercy to an election from Israel presently defined; and, therefore, he is fitly represented as coming from the east, or, the *sun rising*—as it is literally given in the margin; for the irradiation of light is continually used in the Scriptures as the emblem of joy and gladness; and, especially, of the festivity associated with Messiah's day. Thus, amongst the last words of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, testifying to his Son and Lord, we read:—

* Quere "*land.*"

“He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.” (2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4.) And to the same effect was the advent of this Holy One hailed by Zacharias, when he uttered the words: “Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day spring” (literally, as in the place before us, the sun rising—it is the same word) “from on high hath visited us.” Luke i. 78.

Having the seal of the Living God.] This is after the manner of earthly rulers, who have seals, as the impress of their authority, the use of which they delegate to chosen servants acting for them. The introduction of such emblem here, is to signify that an act of Divine discrimination is about to ensue, by virtue of which there shall be insured, in the midst of Israel’s apostacy, and the impending judgments coming on them, a seed to serve the Lord.

Ver. 2, 3. *And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*] Thus an arrest is put upon the agencies of devastation ready to be let loose, till this Angel and his fellows (“we”) fulfil the trust assigned to them; from whose formal recital of the same, we learn,

through what objects in nature, mankind, and especially Israel, will be plagued,—the earth, the sea, and the trees ; as, also, that the sealed ones will *manifestly* owe their immunity, amidst all this scene of judgment, to their being acknowledged of God as the people of his choice ; for they are spoken of as being to be sealed *on their foreheads*. This expression, doubtless, further implies that they will openly confess Jehovah in that day, as the God of their salvation ; and, in the 91st Psalm, we have the prophetic celebration of both their piety and preservation ; they will say of the Lord :—“ He is my refuge and my fortress : my God ; in him will I trust.” “ He will deliver them from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. They shall not be afraid for the terror by night ; nor for the arrow that flieth by day. A thousand shall fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand, but it shall not come nigh them. Only with their eyes shall they behold and see the reward of the wicked.” (v. 3, 5, 7, 8.) This Psalm, it is obvious, applies not to the present Church dispensation ; for, in seasons of epidemic suffering and mortality, the saints, now, are not exempted ; nor is it promised that they shall be.

It may be well to add, that the spared remnant, in the 9th of Ezekiel, are commanded of God to be distinguished in like manner as the sealed ones

here, from the devoted inhabitants of Jerusalem, whose unblushing idolatry is shown in vision to the Prophet:—"And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." Ver. 3, 4. These parties, it is to be observed, have their lot cast in the corrupt *city*, and not in the Jewish land at large, or among the nations. But that they belong to the sealed ones viewed in this wider aspect in the chapter before us, is highly probable, inasmuch as it seems to be the same future crisis of latter day apostacy, from which both are delivered. At all events, the notion that Ezekiel's vision has had its realization in the past cannot satisfy the careful enquirer; whereas, the analogy between it and the rehearsal here presented to us is strikingly obvious.

Ver. 4. *And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*] Thus the number of the sealed is given in the gross. It is told off as it were in the hearing of the Apostle. Twelve times twelve thousand of every tribe—a full square number—denoting completeness; representing, perhaps, as

the multiple of the twelve Patriarchs and the twelve Apostles, not only so many units of individuals, but their relation, as nucleus, to the entire nation eventually to be collected. For, it is not to be supposed that 144,000 constitute all that shall survive of the seed of Abraham to inherit the promises made to the Fathers ; but that, first of all, this proportion, selected from all the tribes, will be chosen of God, to confess Him, and be confessed by Him, in the midst of the nation.

The connexion which we discerned between the vision of the rainbow round about the throne in the 4th chapter, and the visitations following—as designed to guarantee the recovery of the earth, notwithstanding the convulsions that it was to undergo, has its counterpart, here, in this sealing of the tribes in relation to the infliction of the trumpet plagues. Israel—will be the subjects of these heavy woes ; but still the nation will survive, indicated by the earnest of these sealed ones ; and so a special allusion to this comes in at chapter ix. 4, where the locust torment is said to affect only those men who have not “ the seal of God in their foreheads.” The whole history of the period through which these sealed ones pass, and which is here given in detail, seems shortly summed up in the Angel’s communication to the Prophet Daniel :—“ And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children

of thy people : and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time : and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Dan. xii. 1. May we not regard Michael as answering to the commissioned Angel with the seal of the living God ; the unprecedented time of trouble, to the period of the trumpet woes ; and the people found written in the book and delivered, to that ingathering, of which the twelve thousand, sealed out of every tribe, constitute an impressive earnest.

Ver. 5, 6, 7, 8. *Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand : of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand : of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand : of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand : of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand : of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand : of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand : of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand : of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand ; of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand : of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand : of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.*] Here, the names of the tribes and the number of those sealed out of them, are accurately specified in detail, as though the Divine faithfulness would

subject itself to be abundantly tested, touching the event of their preservation. And, accordingly, in chapter xiv. of this book, we have this very company presented to us, in attendance on Messiah, when He appears; with the distinction attaching to them of having passed unharmed, morally as well as physically, through their ordeal of fierce temptation:—"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb," (or, as it should be,) "*the* Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts," (living creatures) "and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." From this last expression—"first-fruits," we collect what has been already hinted, that, however these sealed of the tribes may constitute an honoured portion; yet, to them will not be limited *all* that shall be eventually saved of Israel. Their character, as first-fruits, rather involves the ingathering of

many others, as the harvest. But the whole description of them, which is here given, suggests a reference to a remarkable band of Israelites of whom we read in the book of Numbers; probably, the typical representatives of these their distinguished successors.

It appears that before Israel entered the land of Canaan, under Joshua, Balak and Balaam, a king and a false prophet, like the enemies we find in the Apocalypse, conspired against them; but the open method of cursing not succeeding,—the Lord having turned the curse into a blessing,—the device at length proposed was to send Midianitish women into the camp of Israel to corrupt them, which, alas! prevailed, and drew down God's wrath upon the hitherto favoured people. But after chastening them, God did not forget the Midianites. Accordingly, we read at the beginning of this chapter :*—“ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites : afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian.” Now, observe how the detachment is drawn for that expedition : “ of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a

* Chapter xxxi.

thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war." The army thus formed, we may naturally regard as incensed, not only against the Midianites, but against their wicked licentiousness, which had proved so fatal to Israel; for, when the Midianitish women, who ought not to have been spared, were afterwards brought to the camp, we find Moses thus inflaming the zeal of this army against them. "Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord."* Thus, between the number and spirit of this host of old, and that of the 144,000 before us, an analogy obtains, such as we might look for between type and antitype. And the correspondence, in regard to exemption from hurt in the case of both parties, is equally remarkable; for, as the 144,000 are seen to survive through all their terrible encounters, so with the detachment of 12,000 sent against the Midianites, not one was missing when their census was taken:—"And the officers which were over thousands of the host, the captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, came near unto Moses: And they said unto Moses, Thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which are under our charge, and there lacketh not one man of us."† Surely, all this is significant of

* Verse 16.

† Verse 48, 49.

some typical relation being designed between the two histories.

On one other point, it may be well to remark before leaving the exposition of this vision—the omission in the enumeration of the tribes of that of Dan. Some have accounted for this as a mark of retribution toward that tribe, because, it is thought, of the Antichrist being to issue from it. But this is scarcely tenable, for, when we look at the 48th chapter of Ezekiel, which enumerates the tribes afterwards to be settled in the land, we find the tribe of Dan included. Perhaps the simple solution is, that, after the division of Joseph into two, when the tribes are mentioned seriatim, one is generally suppressed; for instance, Simeon is omitted in the blessings of Moses (Deut. xxxiii.), as Dan here; while Levi, which is inserted here, is omitted in Numbers xiii.; but, still, in every list, *the integral number twelve is always maintained*. At the same time, it should not pass unnoticed, that in this final enumeration of the tribes, the list is so adjusted, as to merge those tribes which were formerly signalled by idolatrous associations; as though to indicate, that now all their sins and iniquities were remembered no more. And this principle, of the Divine dealings, if recognized here, enables us to account *precisely* for the omission in this chapter, not only of the tribe of Dan, but of Ephraim, for

whom the name of Joseph the Father is substituted. For, both these tribes were rendered ignoble, by their participation in *Micah's* idolatry, under the Judges—see Judges xviii. 2, 30, 31; and afterwards by *Jeroboam's*, see 1 Kings xi. 26; and xii. 28—30;—Jeroboam, an *Ephrathite*, having devised the idolatrous insignia of the golden calves, whilst the tribe of *Dan*, in their territory, gave entertainment to the abomination.

In the light of this vision, thus considered, how impressively is the glorious truth commended to us, that “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance,” that is, *change of mind*. There is no fickleness in God. “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Num. xxiii. 19.) “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.” Their worthlessness, indeed, shall be demonstrated to their own experience, and the observation of all intelligent creatures; but, when this end is achieved, God will effectually vindicate his own faithfulness. That assertion of his character—“I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed,” (Mal. iii. 6,)—will then be understood to the enlightenment of mankind at large. It will be revealed in Israel in illuminated letters, so that all the world will read it; and,—“the Lord

hath done great things for them," *i.e.*, his people Israel—will be reverberated unto the ends of the earth. And, oh! what interest ought we to take, if believers, in the contemplation of this glorious issue; for, what are *we* but poor changing creatures, and whence our preservation unto the better inheritance than even Israel's—the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for us in heaven—but in the immutable love of our God, from which, in Christ Jesus, we may exultingly say with the Apostle;—"neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us." But, if that love shall have failed in *Israel's* case, as some would teach, why not in ours? Christian reader! see how practical in its import to yourself is the literal interpretation of Jewish prophecy.

CHAPTER VII.

SECTION SECOND.

Verses 9—17.

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands:

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts (living creatures), and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God.

12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Ver. 9. *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.]* The ascertained character of the preceding vision, indicates, it is submitted, a clue to the import of the present. The ultimate redemption of *Israel* out of all his troubles, is *there* assured to the eye of faith. *Here* is rehearsed the like event, in regard to *the Gentile nations*; and continually, throughout the Scriptures, the latter is celebrated as the sequel of the former. Thus, in the 67th

Psalm we read, “God be merciful unto *us*, and bless *us*; and cause his face to shine upon *us*. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.” The same issue is summed up in verse 7: “God shall bless *us*: and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.” Again, in Psalm xcvi., a reiteration of this occurs, “He hath remembered his mercy and truth towards *the house of Israel*: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of *our* God.” Verse 3. To the same effect we read in the Prophet Isaiah: “Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed *Jerusalem*. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of *our* God.” Chap. lii. 9, 10. And, in the epistle to the Romans, the matter is thus forcibly argued by the Spirit: “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” Rom. xi. 15.

Thus, not only shall Israel survive the tremendous judgments which will be let loose upon the earth, in the coming day of wrath, but with them a countless multitude out of all the nations; and both shall serve the Lord in happy unison.

A representation of this is now introduced to us, and the scene seems taken from what will

obtain at the feast of tabernacles, when, according to the prophecy of Zechariah, “every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the king, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.” Zech. xiv. 16.

Stood before the throne.] This vision being anticipatory, the throne here mentioned, must be contemplated as at length established in its place; and what that place shall be, is clearly and circumstantially stated elsewhere. For instance, in the third chapter of Jeremiah, it is written, “At that time,” the time of Israel’s restoration to their land, “they shall call *Jerusalem* the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem.” (Jer. iii. 17.) And the Prophet Ezekiel defines it still further, where he represents “the glory of the Lord as filling the house,” (the temple); and rehearses the proclamation addressed to him on the occasion, as follows:—“Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever.” Ezek. xliii. 7.

And before the Lamb.] This is evidently the Lord Jesus, the occupier of the throne, as the great executive of God. Indeed, in ver. 17, as well as in chap. v. 6, He is expressly described as being “in the midst of the throne.”

Clothed with white robes.] See on chapter vi. 11, page 360.

And palms in their hands.] This confirms the view already stated, of the observance of the feast of Tabernacles constituting the ground-work of this vision. For, the carrying of palms, was one feature of that festive ordinance, as we see enjoined in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus, and the 40th verse: “And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.” This was by way of memorial of the journeyings of Israel, in the wilderness, when they had no fixed habitation, and were dependant for their temporary encampments upon the arboreal accommodation which nature afforded. And, it is remarkable that from the days of Joshua till the return from the Babylonish captivity, the keeping of this feast, at least thus accurately, appears to have been intermitted by the Jewish people. This we learn from the 8th of Nehemiah;—“So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the House of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. And all the congregation of them that were come again out

of the captivity made booths and sat under the booths: for, *since the days of Joshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the Children of Israel done so.*" (Ver. 16, 17.) The defective observance of the ordinance here implied, as characterizing former periods, was, perhaps, suffered of God, as a silent but significant intimation that the settlement of the Tribes in Canaan, under Joshua, was not that which the Lord intended for them ultimately, though typical of it. And, doubtless, after the same manner, the absence of any record touching the full and complete keeping of this feast, since the time of Nehemiah, has been designed to suggest, that neither did the return of the remnant from Babylon, constitute that rest from all their wanderings of which this feast was to be a memorial; but that such event was still future—in their restoration from all countries of their present dispersion, never more to be disturbed.

Ver. 10. *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*] The original is emphatically "*the salvation,*" and, no doubt, is designed to allude to their deliverance from the temporal calamities constituting the great tribulation, which will have proved so fatal to the rest of mankind, as well as to the salvation of their souls. The glory in regard to both, they here ascribe to Divine grace

and power operating through the blood of redemption, whereof the title, “the Lamb,” is ever the memorial.

Ver. 11. *And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, (living creatures) and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God.*] Thus—as in chapter v. 11, 12, on the occasion of the sealed book being taken possession of—the angels are affected at beholding the foregoing fruit of redemption, and prostrate themselves in adoring worship before the throne. By the scene they witness, the knowledge of their God is afresh commended to them, and they rejoice accordingly. This is in happy keeping with the interest ascribed by our Lord to these Heavenly Functionaries, when He speaks of there being joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Luke xv. 10.

Ver. 12. *Saying, Amen, blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*] Such is the strain of praise with which these attendant hosts accompany their worship, wherein they pronounce an emphatic Amen to the loud song of the saved nations, and again evince their zeal in magnifying God, by accumulating their terms of ascriptive homage. See page 300.

Ver. 13. *And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they ?*] With the obvious design to impart information to the Apostle, and through him to the Church, one of the twenty four crowned elders here interposes with an enquiry, as to who were represented in the scene before him. We may thus gather that more than reverential contemplation, even holy inquisitiveness, should be exercised upon all the visions of this book. It is not vague wonder that our God would have them to elicit from us, but intelligent recognition of His works and ways.

Ver. 14. *And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest.*] This answer evinces the becoming inquisitiveness which the question of the elder was intended to awaken. But we also perceive by it, the humble submissiveness to Divine teaching, with which such spirit should ever be accompanied. John would not allow his imagination to suggest any thing upon the matter before him, but waited for the clue to be furnished to him in the course of the revelation itself. Oh ! that this waiting upon God's own guidance prevailed more in the interpretation of Scripture in general, and particularly of this book. But, alas ! in this case, as in others, conceit in knowledge amongst expositors has proved the enemy of knowledge. They have predetermined with themselves what was worthy

of the Divine Being to unfold in this part of His word ; and thus setting out with imputing their thoughts to God, they have been occupied as they proceeded, and somewhat necessarily, with the endeavour to vindicate their own consistency ; instead of really interpreting His mind. Let us ever remember, then, as we study the word of God, the sacred admonition, “ The meek will he guide in judgment : and the meek will he teach his way.” Psalm xxv. 9.

And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation.] Literally, “ these are they who come, or, *the coming ones*, out of the great tribulation.” It is the same word which is used in the enquiry of our Lord, “ Art thou he that should come,” literally, “ *the coming one*,”* in reference to the hoped for Messiah. This multitude, then, represents the nations of the earth who shall emerge out of the great tribulation of the latter day ; the severity of which, as we elsewhere read, shall be such, that if God did not shorten it for the elect’s sake, “ no flesh should be saved.”† It is the same tribulation which is referred to in Daniel xii. 1. There we read that a *Jewish* election shall be delivered. Here is supplementary information concerning a similar election of *Gentiles* ; and both shall constitute, in due

* Matthew xi. 3.

† See Matthew xxiv. 22.

subordination, the redeemed inhabitants of the millennial earth.

And have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.] In the consecration of Aaron and his sons, the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled, not only on the altar, but on the several parts of their persons, and even on their garments, to signify that they were brought nigh to God, even as the Church now, by the blood of Christ. After this manner, also, all believers are said to be “washed, justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God.” 1 Cor. vi. 11. And here the meaning is the same; by virtue of the blood of the Lamb, will the nations hereafter, who go up to worship the Lord at Jerusalem, find pardon and acceptance.

Ver. 15. *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.*] This is in reference to the unceasing round of worship which will be kept up at Jerusalem by the concourse of the nations, who will repair thither from all quarters. We find the same language used by St. Paul in Acts xxvi. 7, where in his speech before Agrippa, he speaks of Israel as “the twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night;” which can only mean, that with the temple services continually kept up by the Priests and their worshipping brethren in the land, they were to be considered as identified.

They were all present there periodically, and when absent, were represented; and, so will it be with the favoured Gentiles, in Messiah's kingdom. The temple will then be the house of prayer for all nations, according to the prophecy quoted by our blessed Lord. See Isaiah lvi. 7, and Mat. xxi. 13.

And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.] The words used here "dwell among them," should be "tabernacle over them." This relates to the glory of the Divine presence in the Person of Jesus, which, from the New Jerusalem, will beam upon the earthly city and its temple, and wrap the inhabitants into sensible communion with their God. For thus we read in Isaiah iv. 5, 6, "And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for above all the glory shall be a covering.* And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain."

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.] This refers to the privations they will have undergone during the period of the great tribulation, out of which they are now contemplated as delivered. We have seen, for instance,

* Marginal reading.

how under the third seal, there is portrayed an extensive visitation of famine, and similarly under the more detailed visions of the trumpets, (the Gentile survivors from which, as well as from the seven vials, are here, I repeat, presented to us by anticipation,) there are announced disastrous inflictions upon the vegetation of the earth, its grass, and trees.

Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.] This is in continued allusion to what the nations shall have been exposed to under the trumpet plagues, for therein we read of the third part of the sun being smitten, and no doubt this will be attended by some malignant influence of this great orb, on the inhabitants of the earth. But on these saved ones now, such shall light (*i.e., fall*) no more.

Ver. 17. *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.*] In Scripture, the office of the beneficent King providing for the happy maintenance of his subjects, is frequently compared to that of the *Shepherd* tending his sheep. Accordingly, here, Messiah's reign over the redeemed nations, is described in terms relating to the latter. Under His genial sway, the dire want and extremity which occasionally oppress mankind shall disappear. At His bidding, the earth, reclaimed from its present condition,

under which it now lies, will yield its joyful increase; and plenty and abundance shall fill every dwelling, and gladden every heart. Moreover, all this being associated with the *Lamb's* occupation of the throne, intimates that then the bountiful goodness of God in temporal things will be appreciated as the fruit of *redeeming love*, and so the more enhanced to every partaker. The blessedness thus depicted, as in store for the countless multitude of the saved nations, is spoken of in the Prophet Isaiah, as also reserved for *Israel*. And no doubt, herein, as in every thing else, precedence and distinction belong to them;—"They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them." Isa. xlix. 10.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.] This beautifully closes the festive description; and, in connection with the grand occasion which causes this happy experience throughout the Gentile nations,—even the glorification of the earthly Jerusalem by the descent on it of the New Jerusalem,—this feature is thus enlarged on in chapter xxi.;—"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself

shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." By this acclamation, doubtless, is celebrated the final consummation when even *death* shall be abolished. Indeed this is one note of the joyful strain, "*There shall be no more death* ; but, as is very easy to conceive, it swells forth from the recognition of that happy state of things which is its earnest, and which will be realized when the Lord enters upon His kingdom. And, so in reference to that time we have similar language employed elsewhere to designate the revolution which shall even then be accomplished : " He will swallow up death in victory ; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces ; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth, for the Lord hath spoken it." (Isaiah xxv. 8.) And, again, we read in the 65th chapter of the same prophet, verse 19 : " And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people : and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." The recital here, bears expressly on *Jewish* hope only ; but in the vision before us, we have its obvious counterpart of blessedness, extended beyond the Jewish people, even to the multitude out of *all nations*, which no man can number.

Such are some of the characteristics of that period, called by our Lord “the regeneration,” which yet awaits this earth and its inhabitants. As the Apostle tells us in the epistle to the Colossians, it is the purpose of God to reconcile all things unto himself, and that by the blood of the cross. But remember, Christian reader, *we* are not left to be included in this circle of earthly blessedness, great and imposing though it be; but are *now* brought nigh to God by the blood of Jesus; and in a relation, the intimacy and glory of which far exceed the brightest portion that will then be enjoyed by the sons of men. And so the Apostle adds, with an emphasis on the present time not to be overlooked:—“And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet *now* hath he reconciled.”* The consequence is, that, knowing what forgiveness of sins is, and that there is a weight of glory in reserve for us, such as the other saved creatures of God will not enjoy; that Christ our Great Head is knitting us to Himself in the fellowship of the Spirit, that we may appear in glory with Him when He comes again, we should be deeply interested in hearkening to the counsels our heavenly Father is disclosing to us—His dispensations of grace, which are yet to affect the world at large. Oh! let us see to it, that, as children of God, in the

* Col. i. 21.

light of such revelation, our thoughts mingle with His in holy love; longing for the jubilee that is at hand, when, together with the “glory above the heavens,” which will constitute our own portion, in those times of restitution of all things, the Lord’s name shall be excellent in all the earth; Jew and Gentile coming into His courts with praise, and making a joyful noise unto the God of their salvation. See Psalm viii.

END OF FIRST VOLUME.

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ERRATA.

Page 14, line 10, for "flower," read "plant."

Page 33, line 8, for "1 Cor. iii. 18," read "1 Cor. iv. 3."

Page 39, line 3, for "it," read "is."

Page 226, line 8, for "a temple," read "no temple."

Page 2 5, line 16, for *period* after "dominion," use *comma*.

Page 242, third line from bottom, for "assunder," read "asunder."

Page 301, the *asterisk* and *dagger*, referring to the text, are misplaced.

Page 360, line 16, for "on," read "in."

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